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ABSTRACT

The wide variety of religious practices in Africa can be bewildering to outsiders. Although most of the world's religions have been introduced to Africa, this handbook focuses upon three categories of religious belief: traditional African religions, Christianity, and Islam. The book is arranged in three parts. Part 1, "Background Information," provides an overview of the major religious systems in Africa and how they have functioned and changed. The Africanization of Christianity and Islam is discussed and examples of African conflicts where religion has been a factor are provided. Part 2, "Activities," gives examples of activities which draw upon the information presented. Included are activities involving religious ceremonies, festivals, African calendars, art, religious architecture, and ideas for discussions and research projects. Part 3, "Supplemental Materials," exemplifies and expands upon the points made in Part 1 and provides resources for activities. African calendars, drawings of religious symbols and architecture, biographical sketches of major African religious leaders, a glossary, maps of Africa, and a resource bibliography are provided. (APG)

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RELIGIONS IN AFRICA

C. C. Stewart and Donald Crummey
with Louise Crane

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Louise Crane, Coordinator

The African Studies Program at the University of Illinois was established in 1971, and since 1973 it has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a national resource center for Africa. Outreach services are available to all individuals and groups interested in increasing their knowledge of Africa and its people. Our major focus is services and resources for schools, however, we also work with libraries, museums, community and church groups, inservice programs, and groups with special interest in government, agriculture, business, language, politics, art, and tourism.

The program has set as one of its priorities the development of curriculum and teacher aids for the elementary, secondary, and college levels. During the first decade of the program's outreach activities, over one hundred handouts were developed on diverse topics by our staff. Among these are a large number of classroom-tested curriculum materials that have undergone extensive revision and updating over the years. Due to the great demand for these materials, we established the African Outreach Series, which is based on the themes and topics covered in the most popular handouts. Each number in the African Outreach Series normally includes: i) background material on the topic, written for the teacher who may have little familiarity with Africa; ii) classroom activities that have been used with success by other teachers; iii) supplementary resource materials in the form of case studies, specific examples, fact sheets, and maps; iv) a select bibliography on the topic. All the numbers in the African Outreach Series are self-contained units, though they may be used in conjunction with one another or with other teaching materials.

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RELIGIONS IN AFRICA

A Teaching Manual
(African Outreach Series, No. 4)

C. C. Stewart and Donald Crummey
with Louise Crane

African Studies Program
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INTRODUCTION

Is Christmas celebrated in Africa? Do witch doctors still function in villages? Why did the Black Muslim movement become so popular in the United States? Is there any connection between Black American churches and Ethiopia? What is Voodoo and does it come from Africa? How do Africans feel about missionaries? Questions like these, some naive, some very fundamental, have regularly been raised by teachers and church groups in their requests for information about religion in Africa. This handbook has been written in response to such questions. It is addressed to nonspecialists in North America, and in keeping with our outreach series, it includes brief background information, supplementary resources, and activities that may be integrated into a variety of instructional settings. While there is much here that can be adapted for elementary and middle school students, because of the complexity of the subject, older students--high school and above--will get the most out of the materials. School or church teachers at all levels should find it helpful in correcting some of the many misconceptions about African religions and in increasing their own understanding of a very basic element of African life.

The wide variety of religious practices in Africa can be bewildering to outsiders. Although most of the world religions have been introduced to Africa, we will focus in this handbook upon three categories of religious belief: traditional African religions, Christianity, and Islam. Our approach has been to treat religion as a belief system that provides meaning to the lives of adherents and a causal explanation for otherwise inexplicable phenomena. The best analysis is bound to come up short of a complete explanation or description of religious phenomena. We have tried to present nonjudgmental accounts and hope this book will provide at least a framework for deeper study.

Organization of This Unit

This book is arranged in three parts: Background Information, Activities, and Supplementary Materials, all of which are cross-referenced.

PART I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This part of the manual is designed to provide an overview of three major religious systems in Africa and how they have functioned and changed. Following a brief introduction, there are five main sections beginning with the three religious categories: African traditional religions, Christianity, and Islam. We describe the basic elements of each of these systems, the settings in which they flourish, and their historical background, including possible explanations of how or why they have attracted or lost adherents.

In the fourth section, we discuss the Africanization of Christianity and Islam, particularly with respect to church government, the relationship between "church" and "state," cultural practices, place of worship, music, healing, and prophecy. In the fifth and final section, we give examples of national and international conflicts in Africa where religion has been a key factor: in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and South Africa.

PART II: ACTIVITIES

This part of the manual gives some examples of activities which draw upon the information presented in Part I and Part III, the Supplementary Materials. Included are activities involving religious ceremonies and festivals, African calendars, art and religious architecture, and ideas for discussion and research projects. For the most part, the resources necessary for any given activity are supplied in this manual or can be acquired through the African Studies Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

PART III: SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

This section exemplifies and expands upon the points made in Part I, and provides resources that might be used in conjunction with the activities suggested in Part II. We have tried to choose resources which school and church teachers might otherwise have difficulty acquiring.

Much of this material has been written by Africans who have had direct experience with these religious systems. In addition, we have provided calendars; drawings of religious symbols and architecture from the three religious systems; biographical sketches of major religious leaders in Africa; a glossary of terms and names used in this manual; contemporary maps of Africa showing the concentrations of Christianity and Islam and the ethnic groups referred to; and a bibliography which includes nonfiction, creative literature, films, and records.

We have also included a section entitled "African Religious Influences in the Black Diaspora" which might be of particular interest to those wishing to better understand the link between African religious experiences and Afro-Americans' search for more relevant religious and cultural expressions.

How to Use This Manual

Within its stated limits, this is a self-contained unit, providing the basic materials necessary to introduce the subject and carry out projects suggested in the Activities section. As mentioned, it can be adapted to various age levels and subject areas and may be used in part or as a whole.

We strongly suggest, however, that the teacher--either one new to African studies or someone very experienced--first read through the manual. Some familiarity with the overall contents will then make it easier to select those sections and activities best suited to particular interests, comprehension levels, and objectives.

Like all our handbooks, this is designed to be multidisciplinary. In addition to the obvious applications to studies in religion and history, other subject areas where this could be used include: social studies, language arts, geography, mathematics (see "Calendar Activities"), music, and art. There are also resources for church programs and other public presentations.

PART I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

RELIGIONS IN AFRICA

Religion is as important in Africa today as it has been from time immemorial. An important distinction between religion in Africa and religion in the U.S. is that while Americans believe in separation of church and state, few Africans in their daily lives and institutions regard religion as separate from matters of politics or society. In many African settings, very comprehensive religious systems also generally incorporate ideas from Western medicine, such as notions of mental health. Indeed, as we shall learn, things that Westerners separate into discrete systems of explanation, such as fertility, the distinction between spiritual and temporal powers, or physical and spiritual well-being, are seen in a much more holistic fashion in African belief systems.

If we are to gain any real understanding of religions in Africa today, we must begin with those religions which Africans developed for themselves. These are very diverse and underlie the world religions that have entered Africa, with especially profound effect on Christianity and Islam. Most important, the traditional religions--some associated with ancestor cults, others with healing practices or fertility rites, state rituals, and age sets--continue to thrive and develop on their own, both in Africa and in the Black diaspora worldwide. Probably half of the population of sub-Saharan Africa practices one form of traditional religion or another on a regular basis, but not necessarily to the exclusion of other world religions. Many of the most dynamic forms of world religions are those that have incorporated elements of traditional religions into their ritual or belief systems.

Due to the effort of missionary societies, Christianity is the one religion that is perhaps most frequently associated with Africa for the nonspecialist. In fact, Christianity is widespread throughout the continent and all of its historic forms are represented: Orthodox churches in Egypt and Ethiopia; the Roman Catholic Church, with millions of followers; and most varieties of Protestantism. New independent African churches have caused a revitalization of Christianity, said to be growing faster here than in any other part of the world.

Islam's adherents outnumber Christians, claiming nearly half of the continent's population, mainly in North Africa, down the East African coast, and across the belt of Sudanic Africa. Most are "orthodox," Sunni Muslims, but Shi'ite sects have made their mark and, due to Islamic injunctions on believers to perform a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, there has been for centuries a mingling of ideas that serve to interconnect communities in Islamic Africa with the wider Islamic world.

As mentioned earlier, Africans have made their own adaptations of Christianity and Islam, introducing elements from their own traditions, such as approaches to healing, veneration of the dead, Africanized rituals, and music. In some cases this has led to conflict with the established leaders of church and state. Other conflicts, national and international, have occasioned rivalries between adherents of different religions. Religion, as we shall see in the last section, has also been used to justify oppression and racial discrimination.

African Traditional Religions

African religions are often every bit as subtle, complex, and sophisticated as Christianity and Islam. Rarely are they as narrow, exclusive, and intolerant as the two religions of Middle Eastern origin. Instead, followers of African religions often fail to see any conflict between their own beliefs and practices and the demands of the new religions. This is partly because the old and the new have much in common, and partly because Africans have been flexible in reconciling the differences which did exist. Let us look first at the beliefs common to many African traditional religions, and then at the practices and circumstances in which those beliefs are expressed. A few comments on the history of African religions will then set the scene for a look at African religion in its contemporary setting. It must be understood that in speaking here of African "traditional" religions we are lumping together well over one thousand different belief systems, so our generalizations by necessity are very broad and our examples very specific.

Common Beliefs

"At the beginning of Things, when there was nothing, neither man, nor animals, nor plants, nor heaven, nor earth, nothing, nothing, God was and he was called Nzame . . . ."* Like many other African myths, the creation story as told by the Fang of Gabon has much in common with the Biblical account, with some interesting variations. According to the Fang, Nzame (God) created the world and then a man named Fam to rule over it. But Fam's arrogance and wickedness made Nzame so angry that he burned up the earth. Because he had been created immortal, Fam remained alive but out of sight. Nzame then covered the black coal of the world with new earth and it was soon filled again with living things. The new man he created, Sekume, looked like Fam but was different in several ways. He had a mortal body but was given a soul which would live after him. Sekume also had a wife with whom he had many children. Their happiness on earth was marred only by the reappearance of Fam and his constant plotting against their lives.

Belief in a High God or Supreme Being is very common in sub-Saharan Africa: known as Ologun to the Yoruba in Nigeria, Ngai to the Kikuyu in Kenya, and Mwari to the Shona in Zimbabwe. But such a God is frequently seen as remote, passive, and impersonal. People in Africa are concerned much more about the different forces which they find daily in the world about them: the forces that animate their world. These forces (sometimes also regarded as gods) are found in nature--rivers, stones, rocks, plants, and animals--and many religions have special taboos associated with them. The greatest nature-god of the Asante in Ghana is the Tana River, which has many gods, Atanno, named after it. Fish from rivers or streams inhabited by Atanno must not be eaten. Sacred trees like the iroko in West Africa cannot be cut down or must at least be appeased with special offerings. The flesh of animals identified by particular clans as their totems or special guardians cannot be eaten. For this reason the Igbos of

*Ulli Beier, ed., "The Revolt Against God", Origin of Life and Death (London: Heinemann, 1969, p. 18).

Nigeria traditionally have shunned meat of the leopard, monkey, crocodile, and certain snakes (see "Some Indigenous Religious Beliefs," pp. 37-38).

Other forces are found in events, working through other people, for malevolent spirits in particular are seen as capable of causing abnormal behavior in people or animals. This tends to make for much more comprehensive theories of causation than we find in Western religion and science. How does one explain a snake biting the third person in a line of seven walking along a path? Western notions can explain what happens scientifically once the venom enters the bloodstream, and theories might be put forward about how the first two travellers first alerted, and then annoyed the reptile by their footfalls. But exactly why the third person was bitten remains, in the end, "chance." In contrast, most African religions will seek and find an answer to the question--a jealous lover was motivating the snake, an angry ancestor was remonstrating over inattention, the attacked was offending his or her neighbors by boasting of new-found wealth. The world, in short, is full of meanings that religion helps to decipher, and African religions view Western notions of "chance" and "happenstance" as inadequate and incomplete explanations of the forces of nature. It follows from this that many Africans refuse to make the distinctions we make between the natural and supernatural, and they see the world as full of moral and personal meaning.

They also reject our beliefs about the absolute nature of death and see a stronger unity between the living, those who have lived, and those who have yet to be born. While many Westerners regard death as a tragedy, Africans see it as a cause of celebration. Burial in most African settings is a purely utilitarian custom, performed immediately after death; but thanksgiving ceremonies for the departed, and celebrations for their transition to a life with other ancestors are major events (see "Harvest Festivals," pp. 39-40). These may take place a month or even a year after the death, and often last several days. The ceremonies are a time to recall the guidance and living importance of other ancestors as well. In North American families one finds a veneration of the departed, a custom of visiting grave sites and naming children after a dead relative, but this form of ancestor worship rarely reaches the highly ritualized, central religious importance it takes on in many African societies. One reason for this is that Africans view life as but one phase of existence which begins before birth and continues in its most important respects after death. As a result Africans pay special respect to their ancestors, the more prominent of whom they believe to be still active in human affairs.

African traditional religions are particularly concerned with health and fertility. Health is seen as something with a moral, social, and personal dimension. Thus, when illness strikes, when things go wrong, or when there is social conflict, many Africans will look for religious answers to these problems. In some societies particular deities are held responsible for certain types of illness or other misfortune. Among the Yoruba in Nigeria, Shonponna is a god responsible for smallpox. The Koranko of Sierra Leone have a taboo against killing or even touching a crocodile, because they believe the crocodile is sacred and to harm it would bring sickness or other bodily harm (see "Some Indigenous Religious Beliefs," pp. 37-38).

Because of harsh conditions which threaten life in Africa, people have great concern for human fertility and for the fertility of their animals and fields. Most planting and harvest times are heavy laden with ceremonial usage of fertility symbols, which are frequently identical to symbols and rites associated with human reproduction. That such ceremonies tend to be community observances reinforces a collective responsibility that can be seen in a variety of customs. Among the Asante in Ghana a married couple that has yet to produce offspring may be given a half-portion of drink at community gatherings. Akan women in Ghana who wish to bear children will be offered a doll known as Akuaba to carry to assist fertility and also to ensure the birth of a healthy child. These concerns for health and fertility lie behind a great deal of religious practice in Africa and also explain the special role women and female symbols play in much African religious art.

In some parts of Africa where powerful chieftaincies and kingdoms developed, people often came to view their leaders as divine or semi-divine. This belief has been called a belief in sacred kingship, and it was not unique to Africa. The political rule of divine kings and chiefs was ended by European colonial powers after they conquered Africa, but the religious leadership of such figures, where their offices were perpetuated by the colonial authorities, has continued. The throne of the divine king of the Asante, known as the "Golden Stool" after its goldleaf decoration, remains one of Ghana's most sacred symbols (see "African Art and Architecture," p. 56). The wider belief from which divine kingship arose--the belief that there is no simple distinction between religious and secular authority, or between the things of the spirit and the worlds of nature and humanity--continues to be very important. This explains why some leaders of the African struggle for independence, and certain founding presidents of today's independent African countries, were given a reverence and respect by their people which our own political leaders seldom enjoy. Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, was given the official nickname of "Osageyfo" (pronounced o-sa-ge-fo) or Deliverer, which drew on both traditional and Christian religious associations.

Customs

African religious beliefs express themselves in many situations and on many occasions. Very widespread are special prayers and practices which reflect the major stages of an individual's life, not unlike the sequence of baptism, marriage, and death in Western religious practice. The welcoming of the newborn into a family and naming ceremonies are religious occasions. (African Names, see "Bibliography," contains examples of naming ceremonies.)

The transition from childhood to young adulthood is also a cause for religious celebration. Puberty is a common time for many African communities to hold initiation ceremonies. In these ceremonies the candidates receive rigorous training in their adult roles and in the beliefs held by their parents and elders. This may also be occasion for circumcision, in some societies for both boys and girls, marking the beginning of a youth's sexually active years, and for ceremonies intimately associated with

fertility rites. "Age grades" or "age sets" may be initiated together, forming a lifelong bond between them. Among the Bambara of Mali, for example, initiation into manhood takes several years, culminating in a two-part ritual, the Kore. The Kore marks not only a transformation into mature adulthood, but also the bestowal of an immortal soul (called ni, which comes from the Creator). The initiates, while recognizing their diverse roles in the community, are forever bound into a single "family."

Some peoples recognize different stages and roles in the adult life cycle as well. Marriage receives special attention, and so also does achieving the status of elder. Finally, as we have seen, death is often the occasion for major celebrations. Commemoration of the departed does not cease with the funeral. Most African peoples continue to honor their dead on subsequent occasions too.

Another focus of religious activity is on the welfare of the community as a whole. Ancestor worship of departed kings is a communal responsibility. The rhythms of the agricultural year are also special occasions for worship and prayer. The coming of rains, the beginning of planting, and the harvest all call for celebration and community concern (see "Harvest Festivals," pp. 39-40).

African religion rarely takes on the highly organized and formal features with which North Americans are familiar in their religious life. Spontaneity is an important characteristic of African religious observances. Nonetheless, there is a structure or protocol to observances when we know how to look for it. "Benin Kingship Ritual" noted among films cited in the bibliography is a good example of a complex ritual explained and interpreted.

Shrines are important focuses of worship and petition, and many shrine leaders play the role of priests or oracles or the medium through which the supernatural works, leading their people in sacrifice and prayer. "Sacrifice" is a much-abused notion in the Westerner's ideas about African religion, despite ample Biblical examples of sacrifice in a real and symbolic sense as a part of the Judeo-Christian tradition. In fact, the ideas of sacrifice in all these religions are remarkably alike, usually involving the admixture or union of those two elements fundamental to life--blood and earth. In many African religions, the spilling of blood on the soil is one of the gravest of rituals; if done outside of a religious ceremony or a religiously-sanctioned event, it is a matter of immediate community concern. These are symbols, of course, that have also been elevated to one of the most sacred rites of the Christian tradition--communion, where the symbolic "blood" and "body" (represented by wine and the earth's "staff of life," bread) are taken in remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice. So too, one of the African shrine priests' most sacred formula involves the recommendation of sacrifice--a chicken or goat, perhaps--with instructions on how the animal is to be bled, shared out, and eaten.

Sometimes shrines are linked with each other, complementing the powers of neighboring shrines. Analagous is the role of masks which, when worn on ceremonial occasions, can be effective in ridding a community of evil influences or bringing prosperity--good harvests, rains, and the like. One

community may ask a neighboring group for the services of a mask that has proven effective there. We associate African masks in the West with wall decorations or museum displays, but in fact they make up part of a rich panoply of religious regalia, including statues and figurines that almost always once held important religious functions (see "African Art and Architecture," p. 56).

The mention of shrines introduces the role of religion in healing and divination. African religions freely and with great effect cross over into what many Westerners believe to be separate fields of medicine and psychology. Healers work in many ways but their object is to locate and rid the afflicted from spirits that have entered them. Some use herbs and natural medicines; others possess keen psychological insight and the ability to unravel and heal the tangled personal and social relationships that lead many people to seek healing; and still others rely on prayer and on medicines. A Western psychologist, also trained as an anthropologist, who studied shrines and healers in Ghana has concluded that the able fetish priest is as capable as the able psychologist in the West to determine his or her clients' psychoses and to prescribe measures or counsel that will alleviate anxieties. A rather distinct role is played by specialists in divination. Such people are called diviners, and they try to find either the course of future events or the underlying causes of present ones. In either case, they serve clients troubled by moral and social conflicts, and they use many devices in their search for understanding (see "Some Indigenous Religious Beliefs," p. 37).

Both healers and diviners (the distinction is often unclear) have come to be known as "witch doctors" in popular treatments of the subject. This is a very unfortunate term, partly because the word "witch" has so many bad associations, and partly because movies and television have presented such a shallow and hostile picture of it. Of course, there are unscrupulous practitioners in Africa, as in the West, but most are skilled in their profession and deserve the same respect or scepticism we would attribute in the West to a religious counsellor trained in psychology. In fact, there is today a growing mutual respect between Western-trained practioners and traditional healers, and in some cases an actual exchange of knowledge and opinions.

In sum, religious counsel in African societies can be found at a number of different levels; the community may be the most effective arena for issues of fertility or group solidarity, but individual guidance for problems of a personal nature is also readily available. The place where most religious instruction and guidance takes place, however, is in the family where family or clan heads, usually elders, serve as moral and religious authorities in the education of their younger charges. Traditional stories, proverbs, and riddles are important elements in this education.

The Impact of African Traditional Religions

Our knowledge of the history of African religions is very sketchy; we know from artifacts uncovered by archaeologists that much of Africa's art history, as in the West, is also the history of religion. Burial masks, Saharan rock paintings, and figurines that date to 2500 B.C. all point to

the central importance of religious ritual in the daily life of African societies of the past. Changes and developments--adaptations of new ideas, refinements in established practice--most assuredly took place in the past as they are taking place today in African religions.

Today we can see such change and development taking place before our eyes. African religions often play an active role in contemporary politics. Many presidents of countries and members of national parliaments consult with traditional religious practitioners and make use of their prayers, advice, and charms. Radicals and revolutionaries also take advantage of traditional religion. The Mau Mau fighters for independence in Kenya were partly inspired by traditional religious beliefs, and have left us records of some moving prayers. Revolutionaries, seeking to overthrow the government of Zaire and bring about a "second independence" in 1964, went into battle with diviners at their side and the diviners' charms and medicines on their bodies. In the late 1970s the guerillas of the Zimbabwe African National Union, fighting the white minority government, paid attention to local spirit mediums, healers, and diviners who claimed to be possessed by special spirits. The guerillas tried to win the support and influence of the medium so that they could gain popular support. They also tried to get the personal spiritual protection of the mediums. It appears that the conditions of guerilla warfare at this time in Zimbabwe created enough individual and social distress that fears about "witchcraft" rose dramatically.

It is not just in political circles that African traditional religions can be found adapting to modern interests and needs. So also in the realm of sports. Soccer is a very popular game in Africa, and many teams sometimes employ diviners informally to help their cause. Their activities are often not all that different from American football teams who have regular team prayers. Buses and trucks exhibit slogans of traditional religion, and often carry the formal blessings of shrine leaders. Nigeria's Electric Power Authority (NEPA) carries the two-headed axe symbol of Sango, the Yoruba god of thunder and lightning (see "African Art and Architecture," p. 56). Rock musicians may emerge from guilds of professional musicians whose organization and music continues to express traditional beliefs.

Before taking up the world religions in Africa we might reflect on the global impact of African religions, especially in the New World. The "voodoo" of Haiti and a wide variety of cults in Brazil and the Caribbean all trace their origins to African belief systems (see "African Religious Influences in the Black Diaspora," pp. 59-62). The elaborate cosmology of the Yoruba people in western Nigeria, with their multiplicity of gods specialized in aspects of natural phenomena, has had a great influence on religions among the African diaspora. Africans originally from both East and West Africa have carried with them to communities surrounding the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic aspects of their religions. Contemporary Afro-Americans have also sought to reestablish ties with religious systems and ideas from their homeland. One example is the Kwanza celebration (see "African Religious Influences in the Black Diaspora," p. 61). Indeed, the notion of a "world religion" is one that in many respects applies to African religious thought that has had an impact in a variety of ways well beyond its continent of origin.

Christianity in Africa

Christianity has, from its beginning, been present in Africa. Matthew's Gospel relates that Joseph and Mary took the infant Jesus to Egypt for his protection. The same Gospel also tells how an African, Simon of Cyrene, carried Jesus' cross on the way to his crucifixion at Golgotha. The Book of Acts recounts how the apostle, Philip, converted a eunuch in the service of a queen who ruled in the Sudan.

By 100 A.D. Alexandria in Egypt had emerged as a leading church center. North Africa was then part of the Roman Empire and the early church rapidly spread into all corners of the empire, including the coastal parts of today's Tunisia, Algeria, and northern Morocco. Africa contributed some of its greatest leaders to the early church. Origen of Alexandria was a major theologian who lived early in the third century. A hundred years later, Athanasius, a bishop who helped shape the Christian faith, lived in the same city. For hundreds of years the church was divided by arguments about the nature of Christ. The New Testament claimed that Jesus was both God and man, and Christian thinkers found it very difficult to state just exactly what this meant. Athanasius asserted that Jesus was, indeed, fully divine and fully human in a way that many people found helpful. Athanasius disagreed with the views of people known as Arians, who claimed that Jesus was not fully divine. Athanasius' views proved lasting, and are still held by all Christian churches. Yet another great African Christian was St. Augustine who lived around 400 A.D. in North Africa. Augustine wrote two famous books, Confessions and On the City of God. which are still widely read. Finally, in Egypt Christianity developed the institution of monasticism. Monasteries became extremely important centers for preserving church learning. The Protestant churches which came into existence in the sixteenth century did away with monasteries; but monasteries are still an important feature of Catholic and Orthodox churches. In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church monasteries remain influential. Monasticism came to Ethiopia towards the end of the fifth century A.D. and attracted many followers. Several monasteries founded at that time, for example, Dabra Damo, remain active today.

Despite the accomplishments of African theologians, writers, teachers, and leaders, the churches of North Africa almost disappeared. The Roman Empire broke up in wars and invasions and by the end of the seventh century Arab conquerors were ruling North Africa. With the Arabs came Islam, which in time became the religion of most of the people in North Africa. The churches in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya vanished. In Northeast Africa things were a little different. In Egypt, a church survived which today is known as the Coptic Church (the name "copt" being another form of the word "Egypt"). While most Egyptians are Muslim, between five and ten percent of the population belong to this church. In Ethiopia, there was a related church, known to the present as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (see "Christianity in Ethiopia," pp. 41-42).

Christianity probably came to Ethiopia with Greek-speaking merchants in the first or second century A.D. The country received its first bishop from Athanasius of Alexandria, and its rulers probably converted between 330 and 350 A.D. By the sixth century A.D. the new faith was setting down

roots in popular culture. In its organization the church in Ethiopia was a diocese of the Egyptian church from which it received all of its bishops until the twentieth century. The Ethiopians generally followed Egyptian leadership, especially in the controversies which raged in the wider church. In 451 A.D. a great church and council was held at Chalcedon, once again to deal with the questions of doctrine which Athanasius had discussed, especially the nature of Christ's divinity. A majority of churches agreed on a statement declaring that Christ was "made known in two natures, one human and one divine." However, the Egyptian and Syrian churches, along with their followers in Armenia, India, and Ethiopia, rejected this definition, advocating instead that the divine and human natures were united in Christ. Since the Ethiopian and Egyptian (Coptic) churches continue to hold their view of the single nature of Christ, known as "monophysitism," an important question separates them from most of the other churches in the world (including others in Africa) which follow the Chalcedon "two natures" teaching.

Until the sixteenth century, Christianity had no impact on Africa outside of the Mediterranean shores, the Nile Valley, and the Red Sea. Then, following the Portuguese seafarers, European missionary activity began. At first, only Roman Catholic organizations were involved. In the seventeenth century some Protestant chaplains arrived along the African coasts, but they ministered to those Europeans who were living in Africa as traders or settlers, not to Africans. There were very few Protestant missionaries in Africa before 1800. By contrast, Catholic missionaries were active in many parts of Africa, although they usually had only a slight impact. Exceptions there were. In the long term, they established the Catholic Church in the Zambesi Valley of Mozambique. In the short term, they had spectacular impacts on the Kongo Kingdom and the Ethiopian Empire.

The Kongo Kingdom was located at the mouth of the Zaire River, in what is now northern Angola and western Zaire. Its king was baptized in the early sixteenth century, taking the name Afonso. Much of the court and many of the nobles followed him, and a sizeable church came into existence. Within a century it was in trouble, undermined in part by the slave trade, and within two centuries it had begun to disappear, declining along with the kings who had been its great patrons. A last attempt to revive it, led in the early eighteenth century by a kind of African Joan of Arc (see "Dona Beatriz," p. 63), ended in failure. In Ethiopia, too, Catholic missionaries first benefited, then suffered, from their connection with local rulers. Troubled by many enemies, internal and foreign, the Ethiopian rulers around 1600 turned to Jesuit missionaries for help. The Jesuits insisted that the Ethiopians accept many European customs and practices, in this way provoking bloody rebellions. The Ethiopians eventually expelled the missionaries in 1633. The Ethiopian, Kongo, and Zambesi cases apart, Catholic missions had little impact on Africa before 1800.

Prior to 1800 few Europeans penetrated beyond the coasts of Africa, except in Angola, the Zambesi Valley, and at the Cape of Good Hope. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European interests focused on the slave trade, which reached a peak in the eighteenth century. The slave trade in no way furthered the cause of Christianity in Africa; instead, it formed a great barrier. In the Kongo it helped destroy a promising church.

Along the west African coast, where the trade thrived, it completely absorbed the energies of those Christians who found their way there. The European Christians then active in Africa put a low value on African life. While they baptized black people, they enslaved them and reduced them to subhumans. In the early centuries of commerce in human cargoes, only Africans seriously opposed the transatlantic slave trade. However, during the later eighteenth century, Europeans also began to oppose it. Protestants helped start the campaign in Europe against slavery and the slave trade. Catholics joined them, and during the first half of the nineteenth century the export of slaves from Africa declined and then (after the United States Civil War) stopped.

European Christians were also looking abroad in other ways. As an outgrowth of the industrial revolution, they founded new missionary societies, such as the London Missionary Society (Congregational, 1795) and the Church Missionary Society (Anglican, 1799), which first ministered to industrial workers and then set their sights on the "heathen" of Africa. Older Catholic societies responded to Protestant activity by founding new Catholic missionary orders. By the middle of the nineteenth century the modern missionary movement in Africa was well under way.

The Europeans, some led on by dreams of commercial gain and popular fame, contacted many peoples who had known neither them nor their religion before. By 1875 missions were established on many parts of the African coast and at a few places in the interior. Missionaries had also begun the serious business of learning African languages, but they had made few converts and had no mass impact. Most Africans who met Christian missionaries in these early years and who hosted them as their neighbors showed only polite interest in the missionaries' religion. Africans had their own religions. They were interested in many of the things the missionaries brought like books, tools, and machines, but they did not believe that these things were important enough to change one's religion for. Some Africans outrightly rejected the missionaries. The mass impact of Christianity on sub-Saharan Africa came only after the conquest of the area and the establishment of colonial rule by such European countries as Great Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Belgium, and Italy.

The Impact of Christianity

The colonial period ran roughly from the 1880s to the 1950s. At this time churches of all kinds expanded rapidly. Missionary organizations mainly staffed by Europeans and Americans dominated the developing churches of Africa. As a result, these churches were slow to adjust to African culture and society. Describing this period, Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa recently commented:

> The missionaries were bringing the light of the Gospel to the dark continent. These poor native pagans had to be clothed in Western clothes so that they could speak to the white man's God, the only God, who was obviously unable to recognize them unless they were decently clad. These poor creatures must be made to sing the white man's hymns hopelessly badly translated,

> they had to worship in the white man's unemotional and individualistic way . . .*

There were some African missionaries at work in Western Nigeria, but they had been trained by Europeans (in Sierra Leone) and had accepted a lot of European culture at the same time. Many conflicts occurred between missionaries and Africans. In some areas Africans completely refused to listen to the missionaries and tried to undermine them. In doing so some African religions took on new life and meaning for their followers. Other conflicts took place between the missionaries and people who had accepted their teachings, leading Africans, in some cases, to establish their own churches free of foreign control. The most widespread conflict came over family life. In Africa the system of polygyny which was important in maintaining the economic life of agricultural communities, was found almost everywhere. Under polygyny a man has several wives. The missionary efforts to impose Western-style monogamy, brought many hardships, particularly on those women who were forced out of polygynous families.

Generally the colonial regimes encouraged missionary activity, although individual administrators were frequently unsympathetic to the missionaries themselves. Both the British and French, however, discouraged attempts to convert Muslims in such places as Senegal or northern Nigeria, where Muslims were numerous and well-organized. Elsewhere missionaries played extremely important roles in colonial society.

Africans flocked to the missions for many reasons. Some reasons were religious. There were similarities between Christianity and African religions which missionaries built on. Some Africans were impressed by missionary piety. Other reasons were more worldly. In those parts of Africa unaffected by Islam, missionaries brought the first form of literacy, and literacy proved a powerful magnet. So important was literacy to Protestant Christianity that in places like Uganda, Christian converts were known as "readers." Missions were also the sole providers of social services in many parts of colonial Africa. In British, Portuguese, and Belgian Africa missions almost monopolized Western education, while in French Africa they were also active as educators. So, too, with medicine. The only doctors whom many Africans saw were missionary doctors, and the only hospitals they had access to were run by missions. The close connection of Christian missions with the colonial governments served to attract some converts, who saw this as a way to rise to political position. But the same connection repelled others, who identified Christianity with colonialism and the oppression of things they held dear (see "Christian Missions in Zimbabwe: Two Views," pp. 43-45).

While the missions worked closely with the colonial order in Africa, they also helped bring it to an end. The church was one avenue through which Western educated Africans could rise, at least to a point, and church governance provided something of a training ground for African leaders. The message of the church proved able to reinforce belief in values

*Edward Fashole-Luke, Richard Gray, Adrian Hastings, and Godwin Tasie, eds., Christianity in Independent Africa (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1978, p. 364).

like justice and equality. Particularly in British Africa, church schools produced many nationalist leaders, such as Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), Hastings Banda (Malawi), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), and Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe). Indeed, one common thread to most of the nationalist movements in British territories was the unmistakable Christian political culture from which they emerged. African nationalism was often anti-missionary, but it was rarely anti-Christian, and the churches have expanded in the period since the late 1950s when African independence became a political reality. Although there have been conflicts between churches and independent African governments, there have also been cases of close church-state collaboration. For example, in Zaire Protestants occupy a number of prominent positions, while the government also works with the Catholic hierarchy. In Tanzania, the government enjoys warm relations with both the Lutheran and Catholic churches.

African Churches Today

There are approximately 170 million Christians in Africa today out of a total population of 400 million. That means that Christians are a minority on the continent. They are also a minority in most African countries, though there are a few countries which have Christian majorities, and/or where churches play a very influential part in national life, as in South Africa, Lesotho, and Zaire. The Christian presence in Africa is geographically concentrated in the sub-Saharan region (see map, p. 73).

Numbers alone do not give the full picture of Christianity's influence in Africa today. Christianity was so bound up with the European social and cultural influence that being a Christian meant the same thing as being "modern" and up-to-date. Today this is still true in many African countries. Missions were one of the main ways in which such aspects of Western culture as clothes, music, manners, and education came to Africa. Many churches in Africa still spread these influences and people join these churches to share in them. People with Christian educations are very influential in today's Africa.

African Christians are organized into a truly vast number of churches. Westerners introduced a divided Christianity to the continent, saddling Africans with many different denominations, traditions, and forms of church government of foreign origin. Protestantism especially stressed a European and capitalist style of individualism as well as local autonomy in church organization, leading to much splintering and formation of sects by both missionaries and Africans. Moreover, Africans in their desire for religious independence, and especially the need to incorporate some of their own cultural and religious traditions in Christian worship, have contributed to the growing number of different churches on the continent. This variety is not, however, the only important feature of African Christianity today. African Christians are also coming together.

The ecumenical movement has had a strong impact on Africa. Most countries with any number of Christians also have national councils of churches, some of which are quite strong and active. These councils coordinate the activities of the major denominations and try to assist national development in many practical ways. National councils join together to

support an All-Africa Conference of Churches. The AACC, in turn, is connected to the World Council of Churches, an organization to which many individual African churches also belong. Both the AACC and the WCC try to help African churches develop their own resources and to play creative roles in national development. Most Protestant denominations in Africa are also tied to international denominational organizations. The Catholic church in Africa is fully integrated into its own world-wide organization, but plays an increasing role in national Christian cooperation. Although African churches are now either independent or fully autonomous in their organization, many remain dependent upon their Western links for financial subsidies. Missionaries have often been replaced by "foreign advisors," "fraternal workers," medical personnel, and teachers; but in many cases the change has been only cosmetic. In some parts of the continent, the actual number of Western religious personnel has increased several times over since independence.

These international linkages have been important to Christians throughout the world. From early days, a special relationship has existed between black American and African Christians, particularly through their mutual concern over a white dominated Christianity that had little relevance to African religious traditions. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, established in America in 1787 by a freed slave, is a major presence in Africa. It is, for example, one of the five largest churches in Zambia today. Church titles beginning with "African" or "Abyssinian" are common in America, as well as in Africa. The "Abyssinian" churches reflect an interest in the "Ethiopianism" movement that began in the nineteenth century (see "Ethiopianism," p. 59). More recently, many African Christians have begun serving abroad as a new kind of "missionary." They are preaching and teaching in churches and religious institutions in Europe and America, and they are contributing significantly to ecumenical conferences on theological and social issues.

The search for a Christianity more relevant to Africa continues, as expressed in the "Statement of African Challenge" presented at a World Conference of Churches gathering in Ghana several years ago:

> . . . for all Africans, even after many years of Christianity . . . the spirituality and world-view of their fathers is still very present. We feel, therefore, that all the expressions of the Christian Faith up to now . . . do not speak to us at the depth of our situation, past, present or future. However, when we come to the Crucified One straight out of our cultural and historical situation, it is then that He has meaning . . . . For, from our unique heritage, we bring the view that God is UVELINGQAKI, One whose beginning or end no man can know or describe; UNKULUNKULU, a Power greater than all powers; MODIMO, that which permeates all and gives it life and LESA, the ground of being of all that is.*

We shall see some striking examples of African religious innovation in the section, "African Features of Christianity and Islam," pp. 20-25.

*World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission, "Uniting in Hope" (Geneva: WCC, 1974, p. 34).

Islam in Africa

Islam is not a faith confined to the Middle East, but it stretches today from Morocco to southern Russia, to India, and China. The continent of Africa is among the oldest of Islamic lands, and in this century it also has been one of the most rapidly expanding areas of Islam. Today almost half of the people living in Africa are Muslims (also spelled "Moslems" but sometimes incorrectly labeled "Mohammadans") or people who practice Islam. Two-thirds of Africa's Muslims live in Egypt, Nigeria, Algeria, and Morocco, the first two countries accounting for perhaps forty percent of the continent's Islamic population. A list of countries in which over half of the population adheres to Islam would include also Libya, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Gambia, Mali, Niger, Chad, and the Sudan, while significant Muslim minorities are found in Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Ethiopia, and the Central African Republic.

What Is Islam?

In the Arabic language, Islam literally means "submission," and it comes from the verb meaning "to be safe." At the beginning of the seventh century A.D. in the commercial center of Mecca (in modern-day Saudi Arabia) a man we know as Muhammad began receiving visions urging him to preach which he and his followers understood to be of divine inspiration. His message emphasized monotheism and a number of social and ethical reforms. This led to his persecution, and as a result he and his followers settled in nearby Medina. The emigration, known as the hijra in Arabic, took place in 622 A.D. and marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. The Islamic year is calculated in lunar months, thus making it slightly shorter than the Gregorian calendar year we follow: the year 1403 A.H. (after the hijra) began on 27 January 1982 and concluded 15 January 1983. (See African Calendars," pp. 52-55 , and "Calendar Activities," p. 32, for the formula to calculate Muslim and Christian calendars.)

Muhammad is believed by Muslims to be the last prophet sent by God (Moses being the first and Jesus, or Isa in Arabic, the one preceding Muhammad). Islam therefore accepts the holy texts of the earlier prophets along with the revelations received by Muhammad. These revelations make up the holy book of Islam known as the Qur'an, also spelled Koran. (Extracts from the Qur'an appear in the Supplementary Materials section, p. 47, 49). Indeed, in the early years of Islam a legal distinction came to be drawn between the status of "people of the Book" (Muslims, Christians, and Jews) in newly conquered lands and unbelievers.

The prophet Muhammad died in 632 A.D., by which time his followers had triumphed in Mecca and their message, urging unbelievers to submit to God's (or in Arabic, Allah's) will, was rapidly gaining momentum throughout the Arabian peninsula. Islam was an ideology that united an outflow of Arabs with their neighboring populations in a period of military conquest that was among the most rapid and far-reaching in human history. Within one hundred years of Muhammad's death Islam was being practiced from the Atlantic Ocean to Basra in modern-day Iraq. The notions central to Islamic beliefs are comparable to many Christian ideas: the uniqueness of God, the importance of Angels, of scripture, of prophecy, and of the last judgment. It was this

final belief, that an ultimate accountability for deeds in this world awaited the Muslim, that was a primary focus of the Prophet's message.

Any set of ideas that spreads so rapidly and over such a distance is bound to be altered by local customs and interpretations, and this was especially the case with the spread of Islam. The Qur'an was not written down until some time after the prophet's death, and then in an Arabic script that was not as refined as the Arabic used today, thus leaving some passages ambiguous. This, coupled with the fact that Muhammad was a prophet and not a political strategist or constitutional expert, led to widely varying practices in the early Islamic communities. One of the early cleavages in the community led to a breakaway by a group disenchanted with an early successor (or Caliph/Khalifa) to Muhammad, who left no male offspring; later differences arose between legalists, who sought God's will through study of the Qur'an and books compiled about the Prophet's practice and life-style (Hadith), and mystics, who sought to divine the right-guided way through meditation and prayer. Each of these groups, in turn, found themselves subdivided over differences in opinion as to the most reliable legal texts or the most effective methods of meditation and prayer. By the tenth century A.D. the Muslim world had developed a richly diverse range of practices (as one writer has suggested, like a Christianity without even Rome). Yet by this time, widely accepted beliefs also had emerged in the Islamic world that have been passed down to subsequent generations of Muslims. These are beliefs generally associated with the largest numbers of Muslims worldwide, identified as sunni or "orthodox" Muslims, and by the sizeable shi'a branch (which has been in the news in recent years because of its dominance in Iran).

Those practices most Muslims agree upon are called the "five pillars of Islam," the practice of which is incumbent upon all true believers. They include 1) shahada or declaration that "there is only one God and Muhammad is His prophet" (Muslims contend that Christianity went wrong when it took to venerating the prophet Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the notion of the trinity, thus denying the primacy of God); 2) salat or ritual prayer five times daily (see "The Opening," p. 47), facing toward Mecca and repeating the shahada; 3) observance of Ramadan, or the month of fasting in the Muslim calendar each year, during which Muslims are enjoined to meditate and pray while abstaining from food and, in some areas, drink while the sun is up; 4) performance of the hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca sometime during the believer's life in emulation of the prophet's own practices (until this century with the advent of modern transportation, this was a prescription that relatively few Muslims outside the Middle East could hope to fulfill; and 5) zakat, or the giving of alms to the poor, orphans, and widows. This is generally done outside the place of worship (mosque) on the Muslim sabbath, Friday, where the needy will congregate to receive their due.

Adherence to these five pillars is meant to assure a believer a place in heaven, although as in Christianity, a variety of additional prerequisites developed through the past thirteen centuries. Muslim scholars, like Christian theologians, have at different times found themselves grappling with debates over the nature of the Qur'an (was it eternal or had it been created), over free will and predestination, or over the place of

logic and rational deduction versus revelation and divine guidance in knowing Allah and Allah's will. Each of these examples, and many, many finer theological points have given rise to a rich diversity of Muslim sects. Rivalries through the centuries between Muslim communities have often been explained as the result of sectarian differences in legal matters or theological points, but this kind of explanation puts rather too much emphasis on theological details. What it does illustrate, however, is how all-pervasive Islamic law and theology can be in political matters. One feature of Islam which Muslims are quick to point up in contrast to Christianity is that Islam is not simply a religion; it is an ethic, a way of life that is ideally a governmental system and code of behavior reaching every part of the Muslim's life. We therefore try to avoid talking about an Islamic "religion," acknowledging its broader implications in the everyday life of believers.

African Islam

Islam was still a new faith when it first spread across North Africa and down the East African coast; within 400 years of the Prophet's death it had penetrated the Sahara. By the fourteenth century A.D. an Arab traveler, who had visited the Muslim world from China to Timbuctu (on the Niger River in West Africa), compared the East and West African centers of Islamic scholarship very favorably with those of the Islamic heartlands. It was Islam which largely replaced Christianity in North Africa during the eighth century A.D. and at the same time spread down the East African coast. By the eleventh century we have accounts of Islam being practiced in the West African Sudanese empires.

Two aspects of early Islamic penetration in Africa bear particular notice: the Arabic language and economic links within the Muslim world. Thanks to Muslim travellers and geographers, we are informed about the ancient empires of Ghana, Mali, Songhay, Kanem/Bornu, and others in West Africa and the Swahili city-states of the East African coast. But these Arabic accounts are only part of the importance of the Arabic language as it accompanied Islamic penetration. Arabic is a phonetic script which permits, with only minor modification, the transcription of any language. Today we know of a variety of African languages that were written in Arabic script such as Hausa (Northern Nigeria), Swahili (East Africa), Fulfulde (Senegal, Mali, and Nigeria), and Hassaniyya (Mauritania). Thus Arabic not only opened the possibility of a vast literature and scholarship in the lands where it came to be studied, but it also provided a literacy that could extend to other languages as well. A second point of importance about the spread of Islam was that it was associated in most areas with commercial networks that linked the most remote parts of the Muslim world in Africa with the economies of other Muslim lands. The Prophet himself had praised the merchant classes, and Islam itself represents as much an economic system and ethic as it does a belief system in most parts of Africa where it penetrated. Mediterranean luxury goods were a feature of the courts of West Africa long before the first Europeans visited the coast, and gold from West Africa played an important role, ultimately, in financing the European high renaissance, all through trading networks and credit systems founded by the Muslim merchants.

The Muslim communities and states in Africa were diverse in the range

of their beliefs but no more so than in any comparable area of the Muslim world. The foundation of each community, whether a cluster of nomads' tents or a state of several million souls, rested upon Islamic law (known as the shari'a) which is based upon the Qur'an, but also incorporates customs of the early Muslim communities. The frontiers of the Muslim world in Africa were also distinguished by the activity of mystic (sufi) brotherhoods in which a holy man (or shaikh/cheikh) served as the chief interpreter and intercessor of God's will for his community. Each brotherhood took its name from a saint whose litany was repeated by members in conjunction with their daily prayers. For example, the Qadiriyya was the group that emulated the teaching of a Bagdad cleric, Abd al-Qadir, who lived in the twelfth century, and the Tijaniyya followed the practice of Ahmad al-Tijani who died in Algeria in 1815. Hundreds of these brotherhoods are found throughout the Muslim world, but the two mentioned here and their offshoots have been among the most important in spreading Islam in Black Africa.

Although Islam was firmly implanted across the West African Sudanic belt and down the East African coast at the beginning of the colonial period, its most dramatic expansion in Africa occurred during the first forty years of the twentieth century. In part this was due to the recognition of Islam and the use to which Islam was put by the colonial administration of Africa (see "Religion and Conflict," pp. 26-29); in part it can be explained as a reaction to European efforts to implant and expand Christianity, which was frequently seen by Africans as part of the European political system. More generally, Islam was accepted as a modernizing influence and an ideology that was not tied to the colonial order. Islam was associated with literacy and the Islamic world did provide African believers with an alternate focus to the West that was not a threat to family and community structures. Even today, in the conservative Muslim communities of Black Africa, Islam is looked to as something of a bastion against the rapid social change that is associated with westernization. This appeal is a strong one to families who value collective responsibility over highly individualistic practice taught in Western-style schools.

In modern Africa, the mystic brotherhoods have been one of the most important Islamic institutions. The brotherhoods were chiefly responsible for the rapid Islamization in this century and they have come to form economic or political networks in many locales. In Senegal, about one-fifth of the electorate belongs to an offshoot of the Qadiriyya order, known as the Mouridiyya; the city politics of Kano, in northern Nigeria, one of Black Africa's largest urban centers, is largely determined by brotherhood membership. To become a member of a brotherhood one approaches a shaikh for religious instruction and, when prepared, receives a certificate that names his master, his master's master, and so forth, back to the founder of the brotherhood. Periodically, a holy man will establish his own brotherhood within the umbrella of one of the major orders. The subgroups owing their inspiration to local African saints today account for the vast majority of sufi adherents in the continent. Although there are scholars in every Muslim community who condemn the brotherhoods as corruptions of true Islam, the fact remains that they have been the most vital force in spreading Islam on Africa's frontiers of the Muslim world. The uses to which brotherhoods are put vary from area to area; in some settings they

represent little more than a weekly prayer group, elsewhere, as has been noted, they wield considerable political influence.

Another institution, the hajj, has grown enormously in importance since the independence of most African countries. To have performed the pilgrimage is a mark of distinction, and in West Africa the title "al-Hajji" or al-Hajjia" is given to the man/woman who has done the hajj. It is also a sign of piety, and many believers will deposit a lifetime's savings on a plane ticket to Mecca. During the main month for the pilgrimage (the last month of the Muslim year), up to 100,000 Nigerians alone now fly in convoys to Saudi Arabia to perform the hajj, and although some complain that it's much too commercialized these days, the experience is one no Muslim takes lightly.

The relation between individual Muslims and the wider Islamic world deserves mention, because from earliest times it was the attraction of "pan-Islam," cutting across cultures and continents that has been one of the attractions of Islam. Today the hajj to Mecca provides a meeting place for Muslims from Senegal, Nigeria, Zanzabar, and Cape Town with coreligionists from Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Syria. Historically, this experience has had great consequences for the spread of ideas, commerce, and even health problems throughout the Islamic world. Then, too, one can find today Arabic literature printed in Damascus, Cairo, Rabat, or Lahore in the markets of Kano, Nigeria; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania or Dakar, Senegal. The "Islamic world" is not an abstraction but a dynamic and interconnected network of communities that in many respects--its common language, common geographical focus, and great tolerance of diversity--is much more tight-knit and interdependent than the Christian counterpart.

Islamic holidays that are widespread in Africa include the New Year celebration ashura, which generally falls on the tenth day of the first month of the Muslim calendar, Muharram; since the Islamic calendar always "moves around" the agriculture calendar, this date falls at a different time each year. Fasting, ablutions, and religious customs designed to assure prosperity in the new year are part of this holiday. The Prophet's birthday is celebrated (known as the mulud in Arabic) on the twelfth day of the third month of the calendar (see African Calendars," p. 53). The details of local practice vary with region and may involve a somber recitation of holy texts by community leaders in the mosque, or be the cause of a raucous celebration of tens of thousands of believers in major urban centers with Qur'anic texts blaring over loud speakers before parades of torch-bearing groups. Ramadan, the month of fasting, is concluded with great celebration and a substantial feast in most households as well as public demonstrations and community ceremonies. This festival is known as al-id al-saghir or al-fitr in Arabic, and the feast as salla. The most important feast day is al-id al-kabir, or tabaski, celebrated on the twelfth day of the last month of the year, during which every family that can afford to slaughter a sheep does so, distributing meat to the less fortunate and to religious leaders. This festival is in commemoration of the sacrifice of Ibrahim (Abraham). Additional holy days in honor of local saints are also common to countries with sizeable Muslim populations.

One of the Islamic customs most frequently associated with a Westerner's

image of the Middle East and Islamic Africa is the long flowing jalabiyya, or gown, which is usually synonymous with Muslim influence. Yet this is merely a customary practice which has no particular sanction in Islam. Another practice Westerners associate with Islam is the practice of men marrying up to four women, which was sanctioned by the Prophet. But Muhammad also declared that all wives must be treated equally and, as one monogamous Muslim husband once confided, "How can one ever find several women to agree that they are being treated equally?" In fact, today one finds multiple marriages less and less frequently, mainly because of the cost of the ceremony and the cost of upkeep of several wives. Islamic customs in Africa as they relate to women vary greatly from region to region; in some areas the ancient custom of purdah is maintained whereby women are kept in seclusion, at least for upper-class women; elsewhere, women play an economic role that rivals that of their menfolk. In most regions notable women saints can be cited as examples of women's participation in religious life. The Islamic prohibitions against alcohol and pork are widely kept throughout Muslim Africa.

Islam, like Christianity, has not been left untouched by its contact with African religions. We will next turn to the interaction of these world religions with the African environment and the stamp that has been left upon them as a result.

Prayers at the "Friday" mosque in Zinder
(Niger)

African Features of Christianity and Islam

African followers of Christianity and Islam are conscious of being members of wider religious communities. African believers in Islam and Christianity have also made their own mark on these faiths by incorporating distinctly local traditions and asserting special concerns and interests in the name of the faith. Six examples of the incorporation of African values and concerns into these world religions will illustrate the dynamism with which Africa has interacted with Christianity and Islam: 1) religious organization and autonomy; 2) religion and the state; 3) worship and pilgrimage; 4) music and poetry; 5) healing; and 6) prophecy.

Religious Organization and Autonomy

African traditional religions were developed in Africa by Africans, so there never were conflicts about local as opposed to foreign control in traditional religious affairs. Both Islam and Christianity came to Africa as missionary religions and in both cases conflicts arose as Africans tried to throw off the dominance of the missionaries. These conflicts were much more acute in the case of Christianity, because modern Christian missions were much more formal and organized than were their Muslim counterparts.

Africans have been struggling for an African Christianity for over a century. The struggle has had two main concerns: church government and cultural practices. The relationship between African converts and Western missionaries has often been uneasy. By the 1880s black congregations in Nigeria and South Africa were trying to gain equality in the government of their churches. Part of their inspiration came from the knowledge that an independent African church existed in Ethiopia (see "Christianity in Ethiopia," pp. 41-42), and part of it came from black churches in the Caribbean and the United States. Equality for blacks generally proved impossible in the mission churches at that time, so some Africans formed their own churches independent of Western control. Most of these conflicts concerned equality in church government. Other conflicts arose over cultural questions like polygyny, dress, and names.

Missionaries insisted that the Bible demanded monogamy, but some of their more educated converts realized that polygyny was practiced by the ancient Jews and they felt that such a practice was more in keeping with African society. They began to suspect the missionaries of confusing European social practices with the teaching of the Bible (see "Christian Missions in Zimbabwe," pp. 43-45). They had strong grounds for this suspicion. Some missionaries insisted that their followers wear European clothes when they came to church and insisted that people be baptised with European rather than African names. Conflicts over these questions led Africans to create their own churches in which they would be free to assert their own cultural values. The combined result of the desire for equality in church government and for the acceptance of African culture has been the rise of independent churches, known as "separatist" to the missionary-related churches from which they parted company. Some independent churches have become large and powerful indeed. The Aladura Church and the Church of the Seraphim and Cherubim in Nigeria, the Kimbanguist Church in Zaire, founded by the prophet Simon Kimbangu (see "Simon Kimbangu," pp. 65-66),

and the Nazarites in South Africa all represent hundreds of thousands of faithful.

The Muslim counterpart to these movements is less noteworthy, simply because the adaptability of Islam to new cultural environments was such that there were few confrontations between Muslim missionaries and new converts. Where, as in the East African interior, Islam was initially associated with Arab merchants who lived off the slave trade in the nineteenth century, a confrontation was inevitable until local people took over the role of Muslim teachers. But for the most part the Muslim missionaries married locally and settled, as merchants or teachers (or both), and thereby became integrated into the communities in which they worked. In the absence of strongly centralized organizations devoted to maintaining a theological or ritualistic standard, as with Christian churches, every Muslim teacher was potentially his or her own "movement." Throughout Muslim Africa are examples of local teachers whose communities, in effect, beatified them and raised them to the status of saints whose influence extended over vast territories and hundreds of thousands of followers (see "Biographical Sketches," pp. 63-68). These are the figures and movements that closely parallel the development of independent churches in the Christian tradition.

Religion and the State

Before the coming of Islam and Christianity to Africa there was a very close connection between religion and secular power, between "church" and "state." This close connection has continued, but with a difference. In some parts of Africa either Islam or Christianity has become an established religion, closely connected to the governing authorities. In the modern country of Uganda a close association existed between the Anglican Church and traditional rulers of one of Uganda's provinces, the former kingdom of Buganda. Even before the British occupied the area, the rulers (called kabaka) adopted the Protestant faith. They remained Anglicans until the destruction of the kingdom in 1966, and royal support for this Protestant church gave it a great edge over its Catholic and Muslim rivals. Such a relationship was common in many other parts of Africa, starting with the special relationship between the emperors of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, running through Rwanda and Burundi via Barotseland in western Zambia to the kingdom of Lesotho in southern Africa. Independent African churches have also developed special relationships with African leaders. The Nazarite Church created by Isaiah Shembe (see "Biographical Sketches," p. 68) enjoys the patronage of the Zulu royal house, and has become almost a Zulu national church.

The association of "church" and state was commonplace in precolonial Islamic Africa where, in most legal codes, the designation of a state and people as "Islamic" or "unbelievers" was determined by the practice of the king. Colonial occupying forces met up with Islamic states right across the Sudanic belt of Africa from the Atlantic to the Red Sea and in many cases adapted, thus preserving, Islamic authority to the needs and ends of colonial administration during the twentieth century. At independence Mauritania took the official title as the "Islamic Republic of Mauritania" which is the only constitutionally Islamic state in modern Africa. But due to British use of the nineteenth century administrative structure of

the Sokoto Caliphate in Northern Nigeria during this century, much of the politics of that region have come to rest upon the Islamic political culture of old. Likewise in the Sudan; where British forces had to crush the claims of a Mahdi (a Muslim visionary who his followers believed had been sent by God to prepare for the end of time) even today the politics of the state reflect mahdist and anti-mahdist parties. In Senegal, where the Muslim brotherhoods are tightly organized and intensely loyal groupings, they have carried a virtual veto power over governments since the early 1950s. With a wary eye to Iran and to fundamentalist movements in other Islamic lands, leaders of many African countries are especially sensitive today to the political potential of Islamic movements.

Worship and Pilgrimage

From the beginning African churches have developed a sense of place. Church buildings in themselves are focuses of pride and identity, and church followers channel great energy into erecting their buildings. Except for the ancient Ethiopian churches (see "Lalibela," p. 57), these buildings at first belonged to the missionaries and were but replicas of European church architecture of the day. One of the pioneers of independent African Christianity was John Chilembwe of Malawi. Chilembwe was educated in the United States and returned to central Africa where he founded the Providence Industrial Mission in the years before World War I. Chilembwe's mission had a large church at its center. He was justifiably proud of this church with its school and workshops, but white settlers and colonial officials were suspicious of his ambition. In 1915 he revolted against the colonial government and his mission soon collapsed into ruin. However, the record of it stands as a witness to the devotion of Chilembwe and his followers, and of their desire for a special place where they could worship and live. Similar desires are found in most African churches today, often expressed in humbler and more practical structures.

Islamic mosques serve much the same purpose as a central and very visible symbol of the Muslim community; some of the most ornate and richest archeological finds from the East African coast are mosque structures. Across the Sudanic belt is a common style for the main mosque sometimes called the "Friday Mosque," which if austere is uniformly the largest and grandest of buildings in most communities (see "African Art and Architecture," p. 58). In recent times architectural styles borrowed from Ottoman mosques as well as the distinct Morrocan styles have been copied in many large cities. Daily prayers are generally said at small prayer sites scattered throughout communities--sometimes no more than an outline in sand of bricks indicating the direction of Mecca, toward which prayers are said.

Pilgrimage is an institution of great importance in both Christian and Muslim communities, an extension of the concern with holy places. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has long encouraged pilgrimage, and Ethiopians make their pilgrimage to the holy places of Palestine, if they can. If not, they visit such places as Aksum, the site of the country's oldest church which they believe contains the ark of the covenant that God gave to Moses. They also visit ancient monasteries, like Debra Damo, and the early medieval capital called Lalibela (see "Lalibela," p. 57). So also Shembe's followers in South Africa have several holy places. Isaiah Shembe, founder

of the church, settled at Ekuphakameni. His son and successor, J.G. Shembe, still lives there, and members of the church come to seek him out, receiving blessing and advice. Annually the Nazarites, Shembe's followers, also gather in pilgrimage on Mount Nlangakazi which continually reunites the faithful. Among Muslim communities pilgrimage to Mecca, mentioned earlier, is paralleled by the importance of pilgrimage to shrines generally associated with the tombs of revered figures and saints. Indeed, in some parts of Muslim Africa such pilgrimage rivals the obligation to visit Mecca and has from time to time come under attack by reformers as not sanctioned by the faith. Nonetheless, it is common for religious trusts to be established for the upkeep of tombs of holy men and for looking after pilgrims, and virtually every Islamic community can point to the nearest shrines where a brotherhood leader or a Muslim political potentate of the past lies buried. Just as such figures while alive served as intermediaries between God and the individual, so too in death they remain powerful intercessors, not unlike the saints in the Catholic church today.

Music and Poetry

Music plays an important part in Christian worship. The Psalms of the Old Testament were songs in their own time, and are still used as such today. Some of the oldest parts of the New Testament consist of songs. When Christianity came to most parts of Africa during the nineteenth century, it came with a highly developed collection of religious songs, and church leaders eagerly taught these songs to their followers. Unfortunately, musically the songs were completely embedded in European culture. This meant that their rhythms and harmonies carried no meaning for Africans. Besides, when hymns were translated for the use of the new African churches, the African words often fitted the music badly. Many African languages have patterns of tone and inflection which meant that the translations of European songs often clashed jarringly with their European tunes, and sometimes became nonsense. Moreover, many African cultures had musical traditions richer and more complex than those of western Europe and Africans were already expressing their deepest and most important thoughts in musical form. Thus it was essential that the African churches embrace African music.

Unknown to most missionaries a major example already existed. From ancient times the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has cultivated its own musical style and developed its own hymns. The Ethiopian Church believes that Saint Yared, who lived in the sixth century, was the inventor of its music. The Ethiopian church uses drums in its liturgy and has continued the tradition of writing new hymns down to the present. A whole class of people within the church known as debterahs dedicate themselves to this task. Often other African churches have, unknowingly, followed this example. The Nazarite Israelite Church of Isaiah Shembe has its own hymn book full of original songs expressing its distinctive beliefs. The foundation of an ever growing body of music--vocal and instrumental--of the Kimbanguist Church of Zaire are hymns and prayers, which were banned by the Belgian colonial administration but were sung in secret gatherings for over thirty years.

The counterpart to these musics and their development in Christian ritual for Islamic Africa is to be found in religious poetry, written to be

recited and occasionally sung or chanted. Although music does not play a role in Muslim worship, drum and string orchestras have been integrated into some religious festivals, despite the fact that purists have frowned on the innovation. Indeed, drumming and other music has been periodically condemned by Muslim authorities in most communities. Much more common and acceptable is religious poetry. While it may not be used in formal worship, its recitation, like the recitation or chanting of the entire text of the Qur'an on holy days, greatly enriches the religious significance of festivals. Common themes are verses glorifying the name of God and His attributes, religious miracles, matters of Islamic law, and a concern with mortality and the hereafter (see "Select Prayers, Religious Poetry, and Hymns" pp. 46-51).

Healing

Healing is an extremely important activity in most African churches. The connection between religion and healing has weakened in North America, although religious organizations do run some private hospitals and some groups of North Americans reject modern medicine in favor of healing by faith. In English the words "holy" and "healing" have a common origin and meaning. In Africa the two notions are generally held together. This has practical results, which can sometimes be very confusing. One result is that missionary churches, and the African churches which have succeeded them, have played a big part in spreading modern Western medicine in Africa. Missionary doctors and missionary clinics and hospitals are still common sights in Africa. Another result is that many African Christian leaders are healers, and they see healing as one of their main jobs. In fact, opinion in Africa is deeply divided concerning the place of medicine in the practice of Christian healing. Some African Christian healers encourage their patients and followers to use modern medicine and hospitals. Others stress the power of God through faith, prayer, and the laying on of hands, and prevent their followers from making use of any other form of healing. These faith healers attack both Western medicine and the charms and amulets produced by traditional African healers. Still other Christian leaders, like Archbishop Milingo of Zambia, have urged that the churches adopt African medicine and healing practices.

One of the traditional roles played by Muslim holy men was that of providing followers with amulets or holy water that might assist in healing or preventing illness, infertility, or bad luck. While some scribes took advantage of their role and prescribed remedies with little or no known value, others were well-learned in the Islamic science of medicine. Interestingly enough, that particular science in many parts of Africa was taught alongside the science of mysticism, suggesting a relation between medicine and psychology that we in the West have only recently come again to fully appreciate. Today Muslim healers, as their Christian counterparts, frequently recommend clients to Western medical establishments at the same time they practice their own trade, thus offering patients the advantages of both systems of treatment. In the main, this form of treatment is for preventative remedies rather than actual treatment of illness.

Prophecy

The ancient Christian practices of prophecy, of religious ecstasy, and of speaking in tongues are much more common in Africa than they are in Western churches today. Many African Christian leaders act as prophets and speak boldly to their people's needs. They find guidance from God in many ways, dreams being a common one. Many prophets find their inspiration in ecstatic experiences, and speaking in tongues is one outward sign of such an ecstatic experience. Yet the fact that these already were ancient Christian practices, repeatedly mentioned in the letters of St. Paul, points out that they are not uniquely African. Indeed, they are not even uniquely Christian since we commonly find healing, prophecy, and ecstatic experience amongst Muslims and followers of African traditional religions as well. The main point is that, compared with contemporary Western Christianity, such practices are much more widespread in African Christianity.

The context for religious ecstasy in Islam is usually that of ritual associated with the sufi or mystic brotherhoods and their periodic seances. Depending upon the brotherhood, these may be weekly or on particular festival days. The seance may be quite low-keyed or replete with extensive and loud chanting in unison that leads to visions and other phenomena affecting some members of the group. The "whirling dervish," a popular Western image of participants in mystic seances in Turkey, in fact originated from the same ceremony that is practiced by some brotherhoods throughout Africa. Like the trance in the "speaking in tongues" associated with religious ecstatic experiences in some Christian churches, this is believed to demonstrate God working through the believer. Individuals may also become known for their prophetic insights and saints are almost always those who have, in addition to prophecy, performed a number of miracles (not infrequently flying to Mecca during a dream or meeting the Prophet or the deceased head of a religious brotherhood). Interestingly, there are some widely reported miracles in Muslim Africa that are remarkably similar to Jewish and Christian miracles (walking or praying on a turbulent sea that is calmed, being swallowed by a large fish and living to tell the tale, feeding enormous numbers of people with a pittance of food), which points either to a common origin or to similar phenomena that are regarded by believers with comparable awe. Miracles are not unusual to Islam in Africa--saints, by definition in any religious context, are saints because of their miraculous achievements or prophetic insights--but there may be a greater frequency of such holy figures with these abilities in Africa's Islamic communities than elsewhere in the Muslim world.

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A hungry man does not hear sermons. (Yoruba/Nigeria)

One who recovers from sickness forgets about God.
(Ethiopia)

If you fail to plant the manioc then God will not raise manioc to feed you. (Lulua/Zaire)

Religion and Conflict in Africa

Africa's cultures are old, but its governments are young. While its people want change, they continue to follow the wisdom of their ancestors, and these two powerful forces of modernization and tradition create a tension in most societies. Many conflicts have resulted, and religion has played a significant role in these conflicts. The cases of Ethiopia and Somalia in northeast Africa, Nigeria in West Africa, and South Africa and Namibia in southern Africa illustrate how complex the role of religion has been in Africa.

Ethiopia and Somalia

Both Christianity and Islam have been unifying forces in Ethiopia, a country of many different ethnic and language groups. A good guess suggests that about 40% of the population is Christian, another 40% is Muslim, and about 20% follow traditional religions. While traditional religions have been important in maintaining local identity, Christianity and Islam have monopolized national politics.

Christianity has dominated the western half of the country for about six hundred years or more, especially in Ethiopia's northwest corner among the Amhara and Tegre people. In the south, its influence has fluctuated, strengthened during the last hundred years when millions of people joined the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The spread of the Church encouraged disparate people to identify with the government, because a Christian ruled Ethiopia until 1974. The Great Rift Valley marks the dividing line between Christianity and Islam. In the Rift Valley, and to its east, Islam has brought unity to the pastoralists and agriculturalists who were divided by language and custom.

While religion has unified people, it has also been divisive. The Oromo, the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, have become a divided people as many have abandoned their traditional religious practices and have become Muslim or Christian. Not even the Christian Oromo are united, since some are Catholic while others are Protestant.

Religious differences have led to internal wars throughout Ethiopia's history. Five and six centuries ago, the Ethiopian emperors tried to use Christianity to dominate their Muslim subjects. Between 1529 and 1543, Muslims reacted by waging a holy war in which they temporarily converted many Christians to Islam. In more recent times, Ethiopian rulers again tried to impose Christianity. The revolution which began in Ethiopia in 1974 stemmed in part from long years of resentment by many people, especially Muslims, over Christian domination in all sectors of government.

Ethiopia's conflict with Somalia also stems partially from religious differences. Ethiopia lies adjacent to the heartland of Islam, and its Muslim minorities have often looked to their neighboring countries for support. This is particularly true of Ethiopia's Somali population, which has many close ties with the people of the Somali Republic. Islam has encouraged ethnic nationalism among the Somali people in both Ethiopia and the Somali Republic. It has helped overcome clan rivalries and divisions

arising from French, British, and Italian occupations. The Oromo, many of whom are Muslim, sometimes have joined the Somali in opposition to the Christian government in Ethiopia.

Religion in Ethiopia has been a powerful force uniting peoples otherwise separated by language, customs, and life-styles. But it has also been a divisive force in Ethiopia, contributing to both civil war and war with its neighbor, the Somali Republic.

Nigeria

In Nigeria, religion has also served to both unite and divide people. Early in the nineteenth century in the area of what is today northern Nigeria, a Muslim holy man and reformer launched a jihad (holy war) against "backsliders" who, while professing Islam, were mixing non-Islamic customs and practices with their religious and governmental practices. This soon led to the establishment of an Islamic state that stretched across the northern half of today's Nigeria and touched the surrounding states (see "Uthman Ibn Futi," p. 68).

After their conquest of the north, the British left the Islamic state system largely intact. It was more efficient for them to administer through that hierarchical structure than to create new ones as they had had to do in the south, which had much more diverse and nonhierarchical political structures. Thus, the Muslim authorities were retained in office and soon Christian missionaries were barred from proselytizing in the north.

Since education in the British colonies was left largely up to the Christian missions, Western education in the Islamic north lagged far behind developments in southern Nigeria. This became a major issue between northern and southern politicians--a conflict frequently reduced to Muslim versus Christian--particularly as independence approached in 1960. Northerners feared domination by Western-educated Christian southerners who might be less tolerant than the British of local customs and traditions.

Indeed, large numbers of southerners, particularly from the southeast which had been heavily Christianized, migrated to the north during and after independence to work in the governmental bureaucracies and businesses. This built up resentment by northerners, who represent half of the country's population. An outbreak of violence against the southerners, especially those from the southeast, a few years after independence was the first of a series of incidents leading to the Nigerian Civil War, 1966-1970. While complicated economic and political issues were more pertinent to this war than religious confrontation, the issue of religion was often used by Nigerians, as well as outsiders, to "explain" the conflict.

More recent political unrest in the north also has been linked to religion. In 1982, a holy man preaching a fundamentalist doctrine in Kano and other urban centers of the north drew the government into an open confrontation in which thousands of his followers were killed. Like the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, the Muslim leaders, beset with rapid social change, often find popular appeal in a return to the basics of the faith. And if this requires militant action, the tradition of the holy war (jihad)

in Islam assures the believer of direct entry into heaven if killed in the cause of the faith.

In the economic sphere, religious differences have also played themselves out. There has been fierce competition in communities where both Christian and Muslim proselytizing has taken place. Each religion is associated with separate marketing systems, credit mechanisms, and clienteles. This can be seen in villages across Nigeria where the "Muslim" north meets the "Christian" south.

South Africa and Namibia

The cases of Ethiopia and Nigeria demonstrate religion can both unify and separate people. The case of southern Africa shows it can be a force for overcoming oppression and for justifying it. The conflict here is within Christianity, since Muslims are a very small minority.

The central issue is an attempt by the white minority (16% of the population) in the Republic of South Africa to dominate the rest of the population. Since 1948, the government of South Africa has practiced apartheid (literally "apartness"), an extreme form of racial segregation. The ideology of apartheid has been developed especially by the Afrikaans-speaking section of the white community, most of whom are members of the Dutch Reformed Church. Church thinkers, to justify the apartheid laws which enforce white supremacy over Blacks, claim that God has especially chosen them and has cursed the Black people.

Black people have also turned to Christianity for support. The Bible they read speaks of Black people not in terms of being "cursed," but rather as a people related to God. Strengthened by such passages as "Ethiopia soon shall stretch out her hands unto God" (Psalms 68:31), which they take to refer to all Black people, they believe themselves to be God's chosen people (see "Ethiopianism," p. 59). For a hundred years, South African Blacks have worked for their freedom by forming their own churches independent of the Western denominations. Isaiah Shembe's Nazarite Church, previously mentioned, numbers tens of thousands of followers and enjoys the patronage of the Zulu royal house.

Black members of such churches as the Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican, and Roman Catholic have also resisted white oppression, and some have served as leaders of their people. In 1912, a group of Black Christians founded what became the African National Congress (ANC). In spite of having been made completely illegal in 1960, the ANC is the leading national political organization of South African Blacks today, and Christianity continues to be a force in its leadership.

Some of the most famous white champions of Black rights in South Africa have also been church people, starting with Bishop Colenso in the 1850s and continuing with people like Beyers Naude and Alan Paton in our time. Unfortunately, such people are not typical of their churches. The Dutch Reformed Church is not solely responsible for the current evil situation; all the major churches are compromised by apartheid. All the denominations in the country are segregated, and there are very few places

where Blacks and whites worship together even when they speak the same language and use the same service books. White Christian prophets of opposition to apartheid have generally been without honor in their own churches.

As in northeast Africa, the conflict crosses boundaries, reaching into Namibia, which has been ruled by South Africa since World War I. There, too, South Africa has imposed its apartheid system, and many South African whites have migrated to Namibia as settlers. However, the dominant Christian church here--the Lutheran church, established when Namibia was under German rule--has taken a much more active role in the struggle against apartheid. It has joined the very vigorous Namibian opposition movement led by the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO). So while the Dutch Reformed Church continues to preach apartheid and to justify white dominance of the whole region of southern Africa, other Christian organizations have joined the struggle in opposition to that dominance.

Conclusion

We have not discussed the indigenous religions, nor has much been made of the role of the "separatist" Christian churches with respect to conflict. Suffice it to say that Africa presents one of the most complex and heterodox configurations of religion in the world today. To speak of Muslim and Christian competition--within and between these faiths--merely touches the surface of some very complicated issues.

Religion is a convenient label, a symbol of distinction that becomes socially, economically, or politically useful when it helps explain why one group behaves differently from another. People's adherence to a particular religion takes on even greater importance where there are diverse languages and sociopolitical cultures and a relative paucity of overarching "labels" that might provide wider identity.

In the United States, we have many ways of identifying ourselves--through political parties, region, class background, educational institutions, ethnic groups, as well as religious affiliation--but we have a strong sense of national identity and thus national unity. Religion, therefore, does not usually carry with it the same degree of political import that it does in Africa.

Having undergone many years of colonial subjugation, many African countries are still in the process of establishing a firm national identity. Religion has provided people with a label, a sense of identity. But for a people lacking a strong sense of national identity, it has also led to sociopolitical conflict; it has been used to fight oppression but also to maintain it.

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Man is good to the person who is loyal to him, and God to the man who believes in him. (Amharic/Ethiopia)

PART II: ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITIES

While a subject of this magnitude may not be treated in depth with younger students, especially at the elementary level, some of the few activities suggested here can lay the groundwork for deeper study later on. Older students and others interested in more information can use this book as a basis for further research. All students should develop a continuing awareness of the role of religion in contemporary events.

Religious Ceremonies and Festivals

The objectives of the following activities are to recognize elements in traditional African celebrations which are common to celebrations in the United States and elsewhere, and to gain a better understanding of indigenous African beliefs and values, as expressed in rituals, prayers, hymns, and poems.

1. Naming Ceremony Reenactment

   Resources Needed:

   - African Names: People and Places (available from the African Studies Program, University of Illinois)
   - "Prayers, Religious Poetry, and Hymns," (see Supplementary Materials, pp. 46-51)

   Detailed instructions for the naming ceremony, with background information, are given in African Names. Selections from the "Prayers, Religious Poetry, and Hymns," (e.g., the Mbuti prayer of dedication for a newborn child, p. 50) can be incorporated into the ceremony.

2. Kwanza: An African-American Celebration

   Resources Needed:

   - "African Influences in the Black Diaspora: Kwanza" (see Supplementary Materials, pp. 61-62)

   Using the information provided in the Supplementary Materials, an advance celebration of Kwanza--e.g., the seven days preceding Christmas vacation--could be carried out in the classroom, to be followed up by home and community celebrations during the designated period, December 26-January 1. In introducing Kwanza, it is important to mention that this is an American celebration that does not come from any particular African country. It does, however, incorporate African traditions and values and words in Swahili, a language of East Africa.

3. Films and Discussion on African Kingship Rituals

   Resources Needed:

   - "Common Beliefs" (see Background Information, pp. 2-4)
   - "Traditional Art and Architecture" (see Supplementary Materials, p. 56)

- "Harvest Festivals: Examples from Ghana" (see Supplementary Materials, pp. 35-40)
- Benin Kingship Ritual, 30 min. film, available from the University of Illinois Film Center, which details sequences of rituals for the Oba of Benin in Nigeria; Benin Kingship Ritual slides and study guide available from the African Studies Program.
- A Great Tree Has Fallen, 22 min. film, available from the University of Illinois Film Center, which shows ceremonies connected with the funeral of an Asante king in Ghana and the enthronement of his successor.

Both films have rich displays of African art that provide examples of the religious and symbolic uses of art. These materials can be used as a basis for discussing the relationship between politics and religion, as well as art.

Calendar Activities

The general objective of these activities is to (1) create an awareness of the many different systems used in Africa and throughout the world of reckoning dates; (2) to understand the significance of religious concepts and events associated with calendar systems; (3) to provide interesting opportunities for practicing mathematical skills, as well as reenforcing the information.

Resources Needed:

- "Calendars in Africa" (see Supplementary Materials, pp. 52-55)
- "Harvest Festivals" (see Supplementary Materials, pp. 39-40)
- An ordinary calendar (Gregorian Christian) for the current year and/or a perpetual calendar, such as in the World Almanac.

1. Introduction to Calendars in Africa.

Although the activities here draw mainly on information about Christianity and Islam in Africa, an introductory session should point out the many different traditional calendars still observed in Africa (see "Harvest Festivals," pp. 39-40) which also have associations with astrology, religious beliefs, and occupational activities. Discussion and follow-up activities could include comparisons with calendars of other world religions (e.g., Judaism, Buddhism), listings of religious festivals that are national holidays in Africa and elsewhere; ways in which calendars affect international relations today (e.g., business calendars, school calendars, tourist schedules).

2. Matching the Muslim and Christian (Gregorian) Years

As indicated in "Calendars in Africa," because of the difference in reckoning the time when a day starts--e.g., sundown or 6 P.M. for the beginning of the Muslim day--and other variations, it is impossible to match up the two calendars exactly. However, using Tables 2 and 3 (p. 54 and 55, respectively), it is possible to get an approximation. Allowances have to be made for the eleven-(twelve in Leap Year) day

difference in years: Muslim year, 354 days; Christian common year, 365 days, Leap Year 366. In Table 3 Leap Years are marked with *. Muslim years are indicated A.H., Christian years A.D. Muslim dates in relation to the Muslim year can be found by checking the listing of Muslim months (Table 2) which alternate between 30 and 29 days per month.

A. General Method

For example, to find the Christian date corresponding to Muharram 10, 2 A.H.:

(1) Table 2, p. 54 shows that Muharram is the first month of the Muslim year; thus Muharram 1 is the beginning of the Muslim year (A.H.)

(2) Table 3 shows that the Christian date corresponding to Muharram 1, 2 A.H. (beginning of 2 A.H.) is July 5, 623 A.D., at which time 186 days (of the year 623 A.D.) had elapsed (not counting July 5). Write this figure in the column at the right..... 186

(3) Table 2 shows that Muharram 10 is the 10th day of the Muslim year. Place this figure 10, under 186 and add the two figures: 10
196

(4) The 196th day of the Christian year 623 A.D. corresponds to Muharram 10, 2 A.H. Since this was not a Leap Year, consult a regular calendar which will show the 196th day to be July 15. Thus: July 15, 623 A.D. corresponds to Muharram 10, 2 A.H.

B. Where the Christian Year Is a Leap Year

Follow the steps in the General Method as above, but in step (4) consult a Leap Year calendar for the date. For example: Safar 5, 1166 A.H.:

(1) (2) Christian date corresponding to Muharram 1, 1166 A.H. is November 8, 1752 A.D., a Leap Year, when 312 days (of the year 1752 A.D.) had elapsed..... 312

(3) Safar 5 is the 35th day of the Muslim year 35
347

(4) The 347th day on a Leap Year calendar is December 12.

Thus: December 12, 1752 A.D. corresponds to Safar 5, 1166 A.H.

C. Where the Muslim Year Begins in One Christian Year but the Particular Muslim Date Is in the Following Christian Year.

In this case, a common situation, deduct 365 days (366 days for Leap Years) from the sum arrived at in step (3). For example: Shawwal 2, 1404 A.H.

(1) (2) Christian date corresponding to Muharram 1, 1404 A.H. is October 8, 1983 A.D., when 280 days of the year (1983) had elapsed) 280

(3) Shawal 2 is the 268th day of the Muslim year 268
548

Deduct 365 days ..... -365
183

(4) The 183rd day of the <u>following</u> Christian year, 1984 A.D. is July 2.

Thus: <u>July 2, 1984 A.D. corresponds to Shawwal 2, 1404 A.H.</u>

When either of the Christian years is a Leap Year: if the first of the two years is Leap Year in step (3) deduct 366 days; if the second of the two years is a Leap Year in step (4) consult a Leap Year calendar for the date.

After working through these exercises, design some others, matching up dates related to particular objectives, such as: planning a business trip to an African country where business might be interrupted by religious holidays (see Table 1, p. 53) or comparing school calendars in the U.S. and select countries in Africa.

3. Calendar Construction

Make a calendar for 19-- which would include the major holidays of Christians on both the Ethiopian and the Gregorian calendars, Muslims, and as many other world religions as possible (e.g., Judaism). The calendars might be decorated with various religious symbols.

<u>Symbols and Religious Architecture</u>

The purpose of these activities is to create an awareness of the many kinds of objects and places associated with worship, from trees and stones to great works of art. Space limitations prevent including here more than a very few examples of art and architecture but more can be found in many books, museums, and even travel literature. Some ideas for class projects, adaptable to different levels, might include:

1. A Museum Display

A "museum" display of religious objects used in Africa could include both real objects--e.g., kola nuts, cowry shells, shrine objects, crosses, prayer mats--and photos or drawings of objects with explanatory notes. This could also be extended to include examples for other religions.

2. Display of the Secular Uses of Religious Symbols

Set up a display on the secular uses of religious symbols. An example of this is the use of the two-headed axe of Sango, Yoruba god of thunder, as the symbol today of Nigeria Electric Power Authority (see p. 56). Another example is the Red Cross; its counterpart in Muslim countries is the Red Crescent. Find other examples of religious symbols used in everyday life: in jewelry, T-shirts, and the like.

Other Activities and Ideas for Discussion and Research Projects

1. Readings and Music

Resources Needed:

- "Music and Poetry" (see Background Information, pp. 23-24)
- "Prayers, Religious Poetry, and Hymns," (see Supplementary Materials, pp. 46-51) or other sources suggested in the Bibliography, pp. 74.
- Records or tapes of African music (see Bibliography)

Simply listening to oral readings and music can be an enjoyable and instructive activity, but more structured discussions and research projects can be based on these. For example, religious literature and music--prayers, poems, hymns, the Bible, the Koran, and books of other world religions--could be compared and contrasted. They could also be examined for major themes across religions.

2. Religious Leaders in Africa

Resources Needed:

- "Biographical Sketches" (see Supplementary Materials, pp. 63-68)
- African Names: People and Places (see Bibliography, p. 74)
- Current newspapers and magazines

Expand on the information given in "Biographical Sketches"; add more contemporary leaders, men and women. The "African VIP" game included in African Names could be an interesting way of presenting this information.

3. African Religious Issues

Research and discuss church/state conflicts and protest movements. Current information might be found by reading the newspapers and by contacting church organizations in the USA or the World Council of Churches (represented in the USA at 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10027).

4. African Religious Influences in the Black Diaspora

Resources Needed:

- "African Religious Influences in the Black Diaspora" (see Supplementary Materials, pp. 59-62)
- "African Features of Christianity and Islam" (see Background Information, pp. 20-25)

5. Creation Myths

Collect and compare creation myths, myths of origin, names for God, proverbs, and symbols. This can and should extend beyond Africa--e.g., to native Americans, Asians, Latin Aamericans.

Expand upon these materials, especially through investigations and interviews in the local community, to find what influences exist. Churches with African titles, such as African Methodist Episcopal and Abyssinian, should be included in the investigation.

* * * * * * *

When God shows a child a yam, He certainly will afford him a stick to dig it out from the ground.
(Igbo/Nigeria)

Effort will not counter the power of God.
(Swahili/Tanzania)

Earth is a market, heaven is home.
(Yoruba/Nigeria)

Do not abandon your old prayer-mat for one you see in passing.
(Swahili/Tanzania)

God drives away flies for the tailless animal.
(Ewe/Ghana and Togo)

PART III: SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Some Indigenous Religious Beliefs from West Africa*

African religious beliefs are too complex and too varied, even within a single ethnic group, to cover in a few words. In addition, some religious beliefs and practices are known only to members of cult groups who suffer severe penalties, even death, if they reveal them to outsiders. This piece will focus only on some common West African religious beliefs, especially those of Sierra Leone.

Religious Beliefs

West African, particularly Sierra Leonian, religious beliefs are connected to a number of objects that represent those beliefs as they are expressed in worship: 1) the celestial bodies, 2) the four elements, 3) stones and rocks, 4) trees and plants, 5) places and sites, 6) the lower animals, and 7) the individual, life, and its transmission.

In most parts of West Africa, the worship of the sun, moon, and stars has been in existence for centuries. In some cases, these celestial bodies are deified. The same is true for the earth, air, fire, and water. For example, some people worship Oye, the goddess of the Harmattan--a hot, dry wind that blows from the Sahara Desert. The worship of water and fire in Sierra Leone is publicly demonstrated during the great festival seasons. In Nigeria among the Yoruba people, fire worship may be found in the cult of Sango, his priest claiming the right to act as salvage man when a house is destroyed by fire. Also when a candidate for priesthood of Ifa (the chief Yoruba oracle) is initiated, there is a ceremony in which he receives flaming oil on the palms of his hands and rubs the oil on his body, without experiencing injury, as proof that he is secure against the fire of sickness. In the same initiation, there are water ceremonies for purification.

Stones are sometimes objects of worship. For example, among many ethnic groups in Sierra Leone, a stone slab resting on a pillar of rock, or even earth or a boulder poised aloft, is an object of veneration. The worship of supernatural powers associated with plants is quite common. There are certain trees which are particularly sacred. For example, the silk-cotton tree is venerated in many parts of West Africa, probably because of its majestic appearance since it is of little utility. Some Yoruba people worship the African oak to which a sacrifice of a white chicken is offered each month. The Ayan tree, African mahogany, and some species of palm trees are worshipped by other ethnic groups in Africa.

Throughout West Africa, many animals are thought to possess supernatural powers. The leopard, for example, is regarded with great veneration. One of the most powerful and dreaded of the secret cults of West Africa is the Leopard Society, which has its stronghold in the hinterland of Sierra Leone, especially among the Sherbro people. Its members, called "human leopards," wear leopard skins, with steel claws in pads. Among some

*This material is excerpted from an article, "Some Indigenous African Religious Beliefs," written for the African Studies Program by Momorie So-kargbo, Sierra Leone.

Koranko people in northern Sierra Leone, crocodiles cannot be killed, eaten, stepped upon, or even touched. They are considered totems and thus are respected and even worshipped.

The peoples of Sierra Leone, like many others in West Africa, conceive of the supernatural as a point of reference for relating to both the universe and fellow beings. This religious concept dictates codes of conduct and social obligations. It is believed that "Ngewo" is the Supreme, the ultimate authority from whom everything derives: people together with the laws and customs of society, the lower animals, and the other constituent elements of creation. From this supreme deity spring lesser gods that perform different functions, e.g., the god of fortune. When there is famine in the land, all the members of society, led by the chief, go to a specially prepared shrine to offer a grand sacrifice to the god of fortune. Many ethnic groups believe in the ancestral spirits as the supernatural aspect of those people that have died long ago. Ancestral spirits are considered a living part of the local community.

Diviners and Other Supernatural Powers

The beliefs in a variety of supernatural powers are important factors in the education of many West Africans. The ritual activities associated with these supernatural powers are of many different kinds. In addition to formal worship in group rituals led by ritual specialists, there are other kinds of ritual activities including: 1) uttering imprecatory curses to avenge oneself of a wrong suffered; 2) preparing protective charms and medicines against evil forces; and 3) consulting diviners to discover a criminal offender, to recover from personal misfortune or family disaster, or to help heal a variety of illness.

Diviners in Sierra Leone and other West African countries are thought to have supernatural abilities. They are often the people to whom others turn in times of continued illness, especially cases which do not readily respond to simple herbal treatment. Many types of ominous experiences that affect individuals or the society as a whole are referred to diviners, who are thought to possess special powers of "seeing" beyond the immediate presence and therefore of interpreting events. A diviner uses certain symbolic objects such as stones, cowry shells, or simply writings on a piece of paper, to predict the future which is hidden from the ordinary individual. The diviner is considered very influential in the community and commands respect from those who believe in him.

Taboos are often related to beliefs about supernatural power. They are strictly observed and are believed to be acts which when performed will automatically release destructive force which may cause illness, death, or misfortune. Two examples of these taboos among the peoples of Sierra Leone are: 1) It is forbidden to whistle at night, as this would invite evil spirits into the house. 2) During a funeral procession, it is forbidden for anyone to turn around to see what is happening behind him, as this will expose the person to the anger of ancestral spirits which are following the procession.

Harvest Festivals: Examples from Ghana

There are at least thirty-eight festival cycles in Ghana, each ethnic group having at least one. In addition, a number of major towns celebrate their own annual festivals. The festivals generally involve communication between the people and their ancestors and are associated with the primary economic activity of the people, usually farming or fishing. The period of celebration follows a timetable in the traditional calendar and each festival is preceded by a period of prohibition on a major activity, such as fishing, farming, or hunting. The main "actors" in each festival are the traditional leaders whose authority, either as chiefs or religious leaders, derives from elective or hereditary office. Two main focuses of festivals in Ghana are 1) the harvest, associated with the principal occupation or food crop, and 2) a remembrance of the dead.

Two festivals will be described here: the Odwira, celebrated by several of the Twi-speaking Akan peoples of central Ghana, and Homowo, the main annual celebration of the Ga-speaking people who live in and around Accra, Ghana's capital city.

Odwira

The Odwira festival is timed to coincide with the cocoa harvest season. The Akan calendar year is made up of nine Adae cycles of forty days each. The Odwira festival coincides with the final (9th) Adae or the Adaekese (Big Adae). Adae means "resting-place" or "sleeping-place" in Twi. It is the day on which visits are made to the stool house where "black stools" of past kings are kept. A stool, a seat carved out of a single piece of log, is an emblem of royalty in Akan society similar, for example, to the British crown. It is the most important regalia of the chief, the traditional ruler. On his enthronement, a stool is made for him which he uses during most of his reign. On his death, the stool is blackened with soot mixed with the yolk of an egg, and is kept in the stool house. During Adae celebrations, rituals involving black stools are performed, in which food and drink are offered to the ancestors and their blessings and protection sought. Only people connected with the rites are permitted to enter the stool house.

The activities connected with the Odwira begin with a forty-day ban on noisy drumming, singing, and funeral celebrations, which is imposed during the eighth Adae. In some Akan areas, the prohibition also includes a ban on the eating of new yams. The Odwira celebrations last a whole week, with specific activities for each day.

The following translation of a part of the invocation rite performed by the chief to the ancestors underscores the function and role of Odwira in Akan society:

*This material has been excerpted from an article, "The Significance of African Festivals: Examples from Ghana," written by Joseph K. Adjaye from Ghana.

Spirits of my grandfather, today is Adae;
Come and receive this food, and visit us with prosperity.
Permit the bearers of children to bear children.
Grant health to your servant;
Grant health to the Queenmother;
Grant health to the Nation.
Let no evil come upon the town;
To him who wishes evil, let evil fall upon himself.

Emphasis is placed on the needs of the state: prosperity, continued births, good health to the nation and its leaders, and the avoidance of misfortunes. At the end of each line, the "hornblower" blows a piece in praise of the ancestors and reminds the reigning chief of his obligations toward the state.

The climax of the Odwira festivities is a durbar--a parade of the king and subchiefs in their royal paraphernalia. The Odwira culminates in a meeting where the elders, councilors, and chiefs discuss the affairs of state. The performance of the previous year may be reviewed, new laws promulgated, and meritorious service during the year rewarded with gifts. Amidst all the official ceremony, there is music, feasting, and dancing for the general public.

Odwira began about three centuries ago when it was instituted as a unifying instrument to bring the provinces under the control of the capital through a common festival. The attendance of the provincial chiefs was required by law at these festivals, which were times when they renewed their allegiance to the Asante king.

Homowo

Homowo's origins are associated with the settlement of the Ga in their present location in southeast Ghana and their first bumper corn harvest. Hunger forced their ancestors to migrate to their present homes around Accra. Homowo (which literally means "hooting at hunger") was started as a celebration to mark the beginning of the period of plenty. Homowo therefore is a festival of feasting and thanksgiving to the ancestors. It is related to the main meal of the Ga, corn, and their principal traditional occupations, farming and fishing.

The Homowo cycle begins in May when the principal priests do the ritual sowing of corn and ends with the harvest in September. The actual Homowo festival falls on a Saturday in August. As with Adae, a ban is placed on loud noises, lasting thirty days after the ritual sowing. The Thursday preceding the Homowo Saturday is a day traditionally marked by the return home of all Ga-speaking peoples living all over the country. Special rites performed for twins characterize the activities of the Homowo eve. The principal activity of the Homowo day is the eating of Kpoikpoi, a corn and palm soup meal. In a ceremony of invocation to the Ga family and clan ancestors, part of the food is first sprinkled on doorsteps and streets before the people partake in the eating of the meal. The Sunday following Homowo is set aside for the exchange of greetings among friends, relations, and in-laws. It is also a time for settling misunderstandings.

Christianity in Ethiopia

Monophysite Christianity was the official religion of Ethiopia until the Revolution which began in 1974, although possibly only 35% of the population belonged to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. With its long history and close affiliation with national leaders, the church was the storehouse of the cultural, political, and social life of the people. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is frequently, but incorrectly, referred to as the Coptic Church. Coptic is the ethnic term referring to the Christians of Egypt. For many years the Ethiopian church was administratively part of the Egyptian church, from which it received its bishops, but today it is completely independent.

Introduction of Christianity to Ethiopia

Christianity became the religion of Ethiopia's rulers about the middle of the fourth century. Many myths and controversies, however, surround the religion's introduction into the country. Some people believe that Christianity was introduced when St. Matthew delivered a sermon to the Ethiopians. Other people believe that the account given in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 8, refers to today's Ethiopia. The story in Acts relates how a eunuch in the service of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, was converted. However, we now know that the story refers to the neighboring country of the Sudan, where, in ancient times, there were rulers with the title of Candace.

A third version, fuller than the others, is recorded by Rufinus (345-410 A.D.) in Historia Ecclesiastica. He tells us that Meropius, a Christian merchant, made a voyage to India, taking with him two boys, Frumentius and Aedesius. On the return journey, the ship was wrecked on the coast of the Red Sea. Meropius was slain and the two brothers were taken to the king, whose favorites they became. Upon the king's death, at the request of the queen, they stayed to help govern and teach the young heir to the throne, whose name we now believe to have been Ezana.

Frumentius promoted the growth of Christianity in the country in as many ways as possible. For example, he supported foreign merchants from the Roman empire who were Christians. When Ezana came of age, Frumentius went to Alexandria to tell the great patriarch Athanasius of his work in encouraging Christianity. Athanasius consecrated Frumentius as the country's first bishop. From the time of Frumentius until 1949, the Ethiopian church always received its bishops from Alexandria; and, so far as we know, they were always Egyptians. However, in 1949 the Ethiopian, Abuna Baselyos, became head of the church; and since that time the number of bishops has expanded rapidly. All the bishops are Ethiopian monks.

Some Beliefs and Practices of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church

When Christendom was divided at the General Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D., the Ethiopian Church followed the lead of its parent church in adhering to the monophysite doctrine that the two natures of Christ, divine and human, were fused into one. In contrast, the Roman and Greek Churches held that the two natures of Christ were united but not fused. Today the

Ethiopians continue to share their monophysite faith, which they call tewahdo (union), with the ancient churches of Egypt, Syria, and Armenia.

The language used in Ethiopian Church rituals is an old Ethiopian one, Ge'ez, which was spoken at the time the church was established, but which is not widely known today. The clergy are educated in the liturgy, but get much of their learning through practice and observation during their service as deacons. In contrast to Roman Catholic clergy, the Ethiopian clergy are normally married. However, they may not remarry should their wife die; monks and nuns observe celibacy. Most clergy do not receive a salary for their services. Instead, they are given land to cultivate and they receive food whenever members of the community hold feasts.

The number of priests is high in comparison with the population they serve. There are about 30,000 Orthodox Churches in Ethiopia and every church has at least two priests and three deacons. In the past, being a priest was a prestigious occupation; however, the absence of a fixed income from the priesthood has lowered the status of this occupation in recent years.

Like other churches, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church observes Sunday as its principal day of worship. It does so by celebrating Mass early in the morning. These services, central events in the life of a parish, are generally very well attended. Everyone takes part in the service to some extent, but normally only very young children and very old people actually take communion. The church also encourages its followers to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays; these fasts involve abstaining from all animal products--not simply meat, but also butter, milk, and cheese. The Ethiopian Church also observes the Sabbath on Saturday, as a religious festival. Saturday, like Sunday, is a feast day, one on which people are discouraged from working.

In addition to this weekly structure, the Church also provides a monthly and annual structure of feasts and fasts which shapes everyday life in the country. Through the month there is a regular cycle of saints' days which are observed by families and individuals according to their inclination. On such days a household has a small feast for a monthly celebration, and a big feast for an annual one. These feasts should be shared with the poor, but are generally attended by relatives, friends, and priests attached to the family. The really important annual feasts of the Ethiopian Church are Timket or Epiphany in January and Easter. Christmas is not held of importance. However, a third annual feast observed through out the country is Masqal, or the Feast of the Cross, which falls towards the end of September.

Christian Missions in Zimbabwe: Two Views

The following articles, written by two Zimbabwe students represent their personal views.

The Scramble for Evangelism: A Historical Perspective on Missionary Work in Zimbabwe*

Significant missionary work in Zimbabwe didn't begin until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was then that missionaries of various denominational beliefs began to trickle into the country, mostly from South Africa. Some of the most prominent groups were the Dutch Reformed Church, which penetrated the Victoria Province; the London Missionary Society, which had an impact in Matebeleland province; the Roman Catholic group, which entered both Matebeleland and central Mashonaland; the American Methodist group in Manicaland; the Anglican group of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, mostly in eastern Mashonaland; and the Church of Christ group in the Eastern districts. There never has been a significant penetration of the area by groups of Muslims.

The role and contribution of missionary work in Zimbabwe is best seen against the light of their intentions. Bearing in mind that South Africa missionary involvement made its impact at the same time as the British South Africa Company occupied and usurped the land from the local population, a lot of missionary activity was never totally divorced from political involvement. For one thing, no mission station could be established without government approval. Missionary groups helped the government by both pacifying the local population through the Bible and vicariously enforcing government policies.

From a broader perspective, then, missionary activity was geared at introducing western culture, commonly preached to the indigenous population as "civilization." They were also intent on training the African population in some rudimentary skills in agriculture and industry, with the ultimate purpose of providing viable manpower for settler labor needs. The missionary's close contacts daily with the people they were "evangelizing" helped foster contacts and relationships between the white settlers and the inhabitant African population.

On the brighter side of the story, missionaries in Zimbabwe have to be commended for two outstanding contributions. They provided both education and health facilities and services on a scale far greater than the government. As late as 1973, for instance, enrollment figures for secondary school (high school) reflected the following statistics: while the government schools catered to only 6,852 students, mission schools had a total enrollment of 21,938 (Secretary's Report 1973). In health circles, almost all major medical centers outside the urban areas were both missionary owned and run. Considering that most Africans live in rural areas, both their educational and health services were missionary sponsored. This also goes for the training of both teachers and nurses.

*Written in 1982 by Ben Magura, who is completing his doctoral studies in linguistics at the University of Illinois.

With the growth of African nationalism in the 1960s, some missionary groups had enough foresight to realize that sooner or later African government and administration was inevitable. Thus they sent some of their promising African students and workers overseas for further training and education so that when the time got ripe they would take up various responsible positions. It may be argued that various mission groups did this for selfish ends: to ensure their continued existence through the support of these people they helped. Whatever the true motive might be, this "philanthropic" move is a reality.

Whatever the future of missionary activity might be in Zimbabwe, history will have it that missionaries contributed in one way or another in the political, educational, and social events of the nation.

African Education in Mission Schools in Rhodesia: A Personal View*

This essay provides a personal rather than an historical account of the purposes and policies of missionary education in Rhodesia between 1956 and 1959. It is based on my experience as a pupil at Mnene Primary School and on my reflections upon this experience when I taught at Nhwali Primary School from 1965 to 1967. Both schools were run by the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The main purpose of establishing mission schools at all levels, from elementary through secondary, was to Christianize rather than to assist African children in adapting to their changing surroundings and shifting social status. In the process of evangelizing, the missionaries had at the back of their minds the colonial philosophy which included the conviction that Africans were a "bunch of unschooled heathen" who desperately needed civilization and conversion.

The Mnene Primary School was a boarding school for children in the upper primary grades which provided religious instruction; academic instruction in history, geography, hygiene, arithmetic, English, and Shona; and instruction in various trades. The primary emphasis was on religious instruction. The teachers had to be Christians to qualify to teach in mission schools, because the main goal was to perpetuate Christianity.

In the early years, anyone who wanted to come to school was admitted without question. However, since the school system at Mnene and other mission stations was soon overflowing with pupils thirsty for education, admission requirements were instituted. One of these was that the pupils in Standard Four (those who had come from rural schools and were primarily non-Christian) had to attend catechism classes, be baptized, and be full-fledged Christians. What especially annoyed me was that the missionaries encouraged African pupils to change their own names during baptism to "good Christian" names, like Richard or Stanley. This was especially unfortunate, because African names have specific meanings which are very significant in

*Written in 1977 by Koketso Phaswana, who did graduate work in education at the University of Illinois. This was written before the country's independence in 1980, when Zimbabwe was still known as Rhodesia.

tracing family social traditions and preserving some aspects of African culture. To the missionaries, it was part of the process of externally and internally transforming Africans.

Religious practice became burdensome to me after three years at Mnene Primary School. Singing religious choruses, we had to march to church for prayers every morning at 8 A.M. and then we were required to attend religious instruction. I came to feel that the missionaries wanted to train Africans to emulate them in all aspects of social behavior. They could succeed only if Africans gave up their traditional beliefs and behaviors and adopted the Christian, supposedly "progressive," behavior which would rescue them from "barbarism" and "savagery." What I particularly regret is that mission school education was based primarily on the life and world view of Europeans.

Africans who completed their education at Mnene Primary School either were encouraged to go to a lower teachers' training mission school, or were given jobs in adjacent areas of Mnene Mission either as teachers or evangelists. Consequently graduates found themselves stuck with the system.

As a school teacher in a mission controlled primary school for grades one through six, I had to run the school according to their regulations. My duties included conducting morning prayers and sometimes Sunday services and teaching scripture in addition to academic subjects. I was frustrated by the idea of teaching the children what I had learned at Mnene Primary School--to see the world through the glasses of European missionaries rather than to conceptualize it in African terms.

Once I pondered: if I were to stay in the teaching service for the next ten years, teaching forty children a year as I did, it would mean four hundred children going through a religious grinding machine. I saw the tragedy of the loss of social interdependence and lack of self-sufficiency which resulted from the mission-oriented life. Although mission schools have provided educational opportunities to many African children, I am afraid that they do not cater to advancement in terms of teaching or educating Africans for self-sufficiency; rather, they drill them in emulating Europeans.

* * * * * * *

Singing "Hallelujah" everywhere does not prove piety.
(Ethiopia)

Where there are many people, there God is.
(Swahili/Tanzania)

God will not refuse food to the mouth which he has opened.
(Hausa/Nigeria)

Select Prayers, Religious Poetry, and Hymns

Confessions of Faith and Prayers of Adoration

Poem of the Shona-speaking Mwali (High God) cult from Zimbabwe

Praise,
Lion of praise!
Lion who laughs at
My little spear, though I throw it far.
But he sees everything, even in Tswana country;
He gathers fruit afar,
and comes back when his children are longing for him.

Lion of praise!
Mwali with the single breast
Sucked by all the tribes; [i.e. provider of rain].
His needle is not for sewing blankets
But sews up rocks with ease. [i.e. master of the lightning].

Mwali is a great one;
A great Mukwakwa fruit tree without sap,
Which is eaten by his children in the rainy time;
A Mupani tree without a hollow which saved the tired squirrel
[i.e. He provides comfort in all seasons and succor in unexpected ways].

Lion of praise,
Lion of laughter, Great Mbedzi.

from T. Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-97 (Heineman, 1967) pp. 21-22

Prayer of the Nuer (Sudan)

Our Father, it is thy universe, it is thy will, let us be at peace, let the soul of the people be cool; thou art the Father, remove all evil from our path.

from John S. Mbiti The Prayers of African Religion (Orbis Books, 1975) p. 143

Yoruba *odu* (recital) from Nigeria

Let us not run the world hastily,
Let us not grasp at the rope of wealth impatiently;
What should be treated with mature judgment,
Let us not treat in a fit of temper;
Whenever we arrive at a cool place,
Let us rest sufficiently well;
Let us give prolonged attention to the future,
And then let us give due regard to the consequence of things,
And that is on account of our sleeping...

from Aylward Shorter, *Prayer in the Religious Traditions of Africa* (Oxford, 1975) p. 101

The Opening, first verses (*sura* 1) from the Qur'an

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all Being,
the All-merciful, the All-compassionate,
the Master of the Day of Doom.

Thee only we serve: to Thee alone we pray for succor,
Guide us in the straight path,
the path of those whom Thou hast blessed,
not of those against whom Thou art wrathful,
nor of those who are astray.

from A. J. Arberry (tr.), *The Koran Interpreted* (Allen & Unwin, 1955) p. 1

Hymn of Isaiah Shembe for a Nazarite dance.

Great is, O King
our happiness
in thy Kingdom
Thou, our King,

We dance before Thee,
our King.
By the strength
of Thy Kingdom.

May our feet
be made strong;
Let us dance before Thee,
Eternal.

Give ye praise,
all Angels
to Him alone
who is worthy of praise.

from B.G.M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, pp. 197-98

Prayers of Supplication and Intercession

Prayer to Ogun, Yoruba god of iron who has power over all metal things.

Ogun, here are Ebun's kola nuts:
He rides a bicycle,
He cultivates with a matchet,
He fells trees with the axe.
Do not let Ebun meet your anger this year;
Take care of him.
He comes this year,
Enable him to come next season.

Ogun, here are the festival kolanuts for you from all of us.
Ogun, here is your festival snail from all of us.
Ogun, here is your festival pigeon from all of us.
Ogun, here is your festival dog from all of us.
Spare us so that we can do this again next year.
Ward off death and sickness from us.
Ward off accidents from us.
Ward off untoward incidents from the young folk.
Ward off untoward incidents from the elderly ones.
Ward off untoward incidents from the children.
Ward off untoward incidents from all pregnant women.

from S. A. Babalola, The Context and Form of Yoruba Ijala (Oxford, 1966) pp. 12-13.

Prayer of a Ghanaian Christian

Lord, your churches quarrel,
Bishops feel superior,
Behave as if they were Our Lord himself,
From Europe they import traditions
And book-learning.
We don't want their division.
We want one Church.
Lord, has your Son not prayed for this one?

Lord, we ask you for one Church in Ghana,
One Church in Africa.
We are on our way.
Give us so much love in our heart
That the separation will be drowned in it. Amen.

from Aylward Shorter, Prayer in the Religious Traditions of Africa (Oxford, 1975) p. 128

Lobi (Ivory Coast) prayer of a fisherman (offering a baby chick for divination to placate crocodile)

O river, I beg leave to take fish from thee, as my ancestors did before me.
The antelope leaps and its young learns not to climb.
In such a manner the sons of men do as their fathers did.
O river, rise up, engulf your sharp-toothed monsters, and permit our young men to enter the water and enjoy themselves with the fish without being harmed.
If there is acceptance from you, then show it by accepting this baby chick.
If not, if you cannot control the monsters, if one of them should harm our sons, then show it by refusing to accept this baby chick.

from John S. Mbiti, The Prayers of African Religion (Orbis Books, 1975) p. 75

On charity, sura 107, from the Qur'an

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Hast thou seen him who cries lies to the Doom?
That is he who repulses the orphan
and urges not the feeding of the needy.

So woe to those that pray
and are heedless of their prayers,
to those who make display
and refuse charity.

from A. J. Arberry (tr.), The Koran Interpreted (Allen & Unwin, 1955) p. 662

Didinga prayer from the Sudan
(delivered while blood is sprinkled on the ground)

Earth of my clan, accept this offering, I entreat you. Drink the blood which I pour on you. This goat, which is the goat of Lokuryamoi, is the price of your beauty. Deal kindly with Lokuryamoi, for he is our friend: and stranger though he be, grant him a harvest as rich as our own. Let Nagitak, the grain blight, shrink from touching his garden, and let the beasts of the forest and the birds of the air know that Lokuryamoi is as one of us.

from John S. Mbiti, The Prayers of African Religion (Orbis Books, 1975) p. 70

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Ga (Ghana) prayer at the New Year festival marking first fruits and said with corn-wine libation.

Hail, hail, hail
May happiness come.
May meat come,
May corn come.
Just as the farmers work
And look forward to the reaping,
So may we sit again as we are sitting now.
May our enemies turn from us and go...
Lord return.

From Aylward Shorter, Prayer in the Religious Traditions of Africa (Oxford, 1975), p. 57

Mbuti (Zaire) prayer dedicating a newborn child.
(as the child is lifted to the sun)

To thee, the Creator, to thee, the Powerful,
I offer this fresh bud,
New fruit of the ancient tree.
Thou art the master, we thy children.
To thee, the Creator, to thee, the Powerful,
Khmvoum (God), Khmvoum,
I offer this new plant.

from John S. Mbiti, The Prayers of African Religion (Orbis Books, 1975) p. 124

Hymn of the Zionist Nazarites (South Africa)
(thank offering for curing of a woman and a witchcraft cleansing rite)

Light, thou angel of light,
Thou, mighty one of the road
Which cometh from Jerusalem!
The shoulders get tired of carrying signs,
Oh, help us with this thy lamb,
So that it will be strong and fat,
So that we shall succeed through it,
The day when we bring back thy daughter.

from Aylward Shorter, Prayer in the Religious Tradition of Africa (Oxford, 1975), p. 99

Hausa (Nigeria) religious poem by a grandson of 'Uthman ibn Futi.

Let us thank God, the Lord of office, the Unique,
The King who shows no mercy to the unbeliever,
Let us thank God, the Lord of office, the Lord of Heaven
Who brought us into the religion of Tahir (Muhammad)
He gave us the Sunna of Muhammad, the Prophet,
He gave us the means of salvation which the
unbeliever does not possess.

from Mervyn Hiskett, A History of Hausa Islamic Verse (S.O.A.S., 1975) p. 195

The Anaphora of St. Gregory (opening lines), Ethiopian Orthodox Church (celebrated on five days in Lent and on 21 Ter, the memorial day of the death of St. Gregory)

1. Deacon: Pray for our fathers the archbishops and bishops, and our fathers the priests, and our brothers the deacons. Pray, O ye children of this church, for the faithful men and women. Again pray for the virgins and the husbandless, for the aged and infants, for children and adults. Stand up well, stand up that the peace of God may be with you.

2. Anaphora of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa and brother of Basil: may his prayer and blessing be with our King (Haile Selassie I) and with our Queen (Walatta Georgeos), world without end. Amen.

3. Priest: The Lord be with you all.
People: And with thy spirit.
Priest: Give ye thanks unto our God.
People: It is right, it is just.
Priest: Lift up you hearts.
People: We have lifted them up unto the Lord our God.

4. Priest: We give thanks unto the doer of good things unto us, the merciful God, the Father of our Lord and our God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

from The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Church (Berhanenna Selam Printing Press, 1954), p. 173

Calendars in Africa

Although national calendars in Africa today follow the Christian and/or Islamic year, many Africans also mark their activities--planting seasons, festivals, market days--by their traditional calendars. These are too numerous and varied to treat here, though one example is found in "Harvest Festivals: Examples from Ghana," p. 39.

The Muslim (Islamic) calendar is used in countries with predominantly Muslim populations (see Map, p. 73) but the Gregorian Christian calendar is also widely used in these countries as in all of Africa because of trade and other relations to the Western world. The Ethiopian Christian calendar, of African origin, as explained below, differs from other Christian calendars and its use is confined to Ethiopia.

Gregorian Christian Calendar

With some changes, the rules governing the Christian calendar most familiar to us (Gregorian) were established at the Council of Nicaea in 324 A.D. (Anno Domini, year of the Lord). Following the solar year of 365-1/4 days, each common year has 365 days and the extra quarters are made up by adding an extra day at the end of February every fourth year, or Leap Year. However, because this did not give precise results, an adjustment was made in October 1582--an omission of 10 days from the calendar that year (see Table 3)--and thereafter it was ordered that each year divisible by 4 should be designated Leap Year, with 366 days, with the exception of centenary years whose first two digits are not divisible by 4. Thus, 1600 was a Leap Year but 1700, 1800, and 1900 were not; 2000 A.D. will be a Leap Year. Because these reforms were made by Pope Gregory XIII, the calendar has since been called the Gregorian calendar. England did not accept the reforms until 1752 and the Russian Orthodox Church continues to follow the old Julian calendar.

Ethiopian Christian Calendar

Like the Gregorian calendar, the calendar of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church starts with the birth of Jesus and recognizes 12 months (see Table 2) and a solar year of 365 days, with a Leap Year every fourth year. However, it dates the birth of Christ seven years later than the Gregorian calendar, starts the year in September instead of January, and has an even number of days for each month (30 x 12). The five extra days (six in Leap Year) are grouped together in a thirteenth mini-month at the end of the Ethiopian calendar. Thus, October 25, 1983 according to the Gregorian calendar is Teqemt 15, 1976 in the Ethiopian calendar. Another characteristic of the Ethiopian Christian calendar is that the years are named in a never-ending, four-year cycle according to the great Christian evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The year of Mark is always Leap Year; 1975 in Ethiopia, 1982 according to the Gregorian calendar, was the year of Mark, Leap Year.

It is not easy to relate the two Christian calendars, since neither the years nor the months coincide. For example, October in the Gregorian calendar coincides with the last 10 days in Maskaram and the first 20 days

in Teqemt. So far as the great Christian festivals, such as Easter and Epiphany go, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church follows the practice of other Orthodox churches.

Muslim Calendar

The Muslim calendar is based solely on the moon's changes and is dated from the time of the Prophet Muhammad's departure from Mecca, on July 16, 622 A.D., known as the hijra. Designating the Muslim years as A.H. (Anno Hijrae), the date July 16, 622 A.D. officially became Muharram 1, 1 A.H. (see Table 2 and 3).

As shown in Table 2, the Muslim year takes no account of the solar year, nor of seasonal changes; being 354 days long, it is always outstripping the Christian year. One year, for example, Ramadan, the month of fasting, may take place in the heat of summer, and another year in the cool season. For this reason some Muslim countries and especially agriculturists, prefer the more predictable Gregorian Christian calendar.

Another fact that makes it difficult to relate Muslim and Christian calendars precisely is that, as in the Jewish year, the Muslim day begins at sunset (6 P.M.) and there are also local variations. However, using the tables 1 and 2, it is possible to make an approximate match of Christian and Muslim dates. Such information is becoming increasingly important to international travelers and any organizations with international interests.

Table 1: Principal Religious Festival Days

Christian		Muslim
Gregorian (Fixed dates)	Ethiopian (Fixed dates)	
January 1: New Years	Maskaram 1: New Years	Muharram 10: New Years
December 25: Christmas*	Maskaram 17: Masqal, Feast of the Cross	Rabi' al-Awal 12: Mulud birthday of Prophet Muhammed
	Ter 11: Timket, Epiphany	Shawwal 1: Id al-saghir or al-fitr (feast concluding Ramadan)
(Nonfixed dates)		
Good Friday, Easter	Good Friday, Easter	Dhu al-Hijra 12: Id al-kabir

*Christmas, called Gena, is not a major feast of the Ethiopian Church but is celebrated two weeks after December 25, i.e., in the month of Ter.

Table 2: Months of the Year

The months are listed in the order in which they occur in the year of each particular calendar; the number of days in each month is indicated in parentheses.

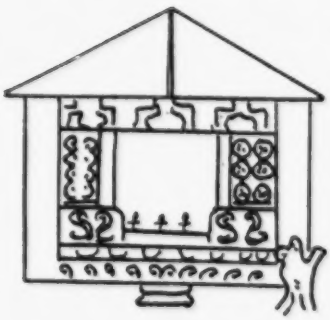
	Christian Calendar		Muslim Calendar
	Gregorian	Ethiopian	
1	January (30)	Maskaram (30)	Muharram (30)
2	February (28/29)	Teqemt (30)	Safar (29)
3	March (31)	Hedar (30)	Rabi' al-Awal (30)
4	April (30)	Tahsas (30)	Tabi' al-Thani (29)
5	May (31)	Ter (30)	Jumada al-Aula (30)
6	June (30)	Yekatit (30)	Jumada al-Akhira (29)
7	July (31)	Megabit (30)	Rajab (30)
8	August (31)	Miyazya (30)	Sha'ban (29)
9	September (30)	Genbot (30)	Ramadan (30)
10	October (31)	Sene (30)	Shawwal (29)
11	November (30)	Hamle (30)	Dhu al-Qa'da (30)
12	December (31)	Nahasse (30)	Dhu al-Hijja (29)
13	-	Paguemen (5/6)	-

Table 3: Muslim (Hijra) Years and Christian (Gregorian) Years

Muslim Year	Christian Date Corresponding to Muharram 1		Number of Days Elapsed in Christian Year
A.H.			
1	July 16	622	196
2	July 5	623	185
990	Jan. 26	1582	25
991	Jan. 25	1583	24
992	Jan. 14	1584*	13
1166	Nov. 8	1752*	312
1167	Oct. 29	1753	301
1401	Nov. 9	1980*	313
1402	Oct. 30	1981	302
1403	Oct. 19	1982	291
1404	Oct. 8	1983	280
1405	Sept. 27	1984*	270
1406	Sept. 16	1985	258
1407	Sept. 6	1986	248
1408	Aug. 26	1987	237
1409	Aug. 14	1988*	226
1410	Aug. 4	1989	215
1411	July 24	1990	204
1412	July 13	1991	193
1413	July 2	1992*	183
1414	June 21	1993	171
1415	June 10	1994	160
1416	May 31	1995	150
1417	May 19	1996	139
1418	May 9	1997	128
1419	April 28	1998	117
1420	April 17	1999	106
1421	April 6	2000*	96

*Leap Year

African Art and Architecture



Akan Shrine (Ghana)

One of the more elaborate shrines. Simpler ones may be found in homes, trees, and other places.

Lumbu Mask (Gabon)

Worn by dancers representing the spirits of the dead.

Ankh (Egypt)

Symbols of life, found in many tombs and temples.

Akan Stool (Ghana)

Used by priests and priest-esses. Another stool, the Golden Stool, is said to have come down from heaven to contain the soul of the Ashanti people.

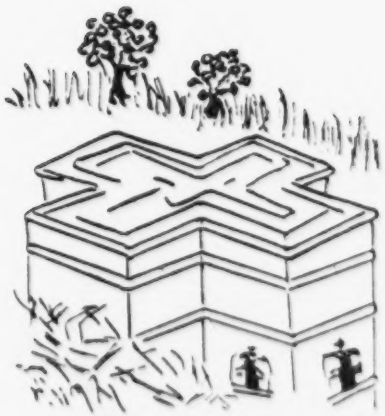
Symbol of Sango (Nigeria)

This symbol of the Yoruba god of thunder and lightning is also the symbol of the Nigerian Electric Power Authority (NEPA)

Gye Nyame Symbol (Ghana)

"Except for God I fear no-one." Adinkra symbol of omnipotence and immortality, appearing on clothes and other objects.

Christian Architecture



Giorgis Church in Lalibela

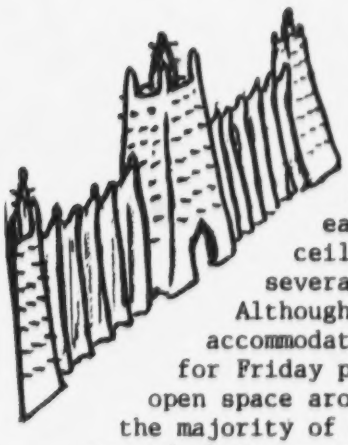
Lalibela, a small town in a mountainous area in northwest Ethiopia, is famous for its spectacular churches, drawing Christians throughout Ethiopia and tourists from all over the world. The most extraordinary thing about them is that--in keeping with Ethiopia's rare tradition of monolithic carving--each is carved from a solid rock, though all appear to to be built of separate stones or bricks. The churches are carved straight into the level ground by digging a trench to isolate a block of stone on four sides, and by carving the block inside and outside to create an attractive space for worship; or, they are carved out of a cliff face.

The Lalibela churches were carved in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries during the Zagwe dynasty. Lalibela, the famous ruler of that dynasty, was quite active in the creation of these churches. His primary objective was to create a place for Ethiopian Christians who had been making pilgrimages to the Biblical Holy Land. He intended the churches to be a new Jerusalem. This is reflected in some of the names in the area: the stream that flows through the town is called Yordanos, or Jordan; the churches are named to remember holy places and events in Jerusalem. While the Lalibela churches are justifiably the most famous monolithic churches in Ethiopia, there are hundreds of others, many clustered within a hundred miles of Lalibela but some found as far south as Addis Ababa.

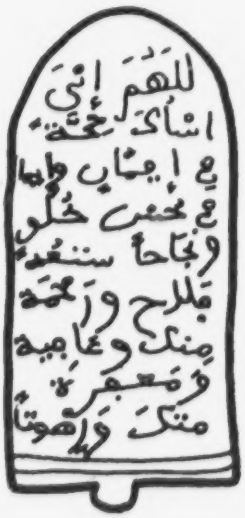
Typical of churches found in rural areas of West and Central Africa are these simply built shelters with thatched roofs and mud and stick walls. A drummer calls the people to worship.

Village Church, West Africa

Islamic Art and Architecture



Facade of a typical "Friday" mosque in the Sudanic belt of Africa, where the Islamic community will gather for prayers on the Muslim sabbath. These mosques are elaborately engineered edifices constructed of baked earthen brick with vaulted ceilings and rising up to several stories in height. Although a large mosque may accommodate up to a thousand for Friday prayers, it is in the open space around the mosque that the majority of the faithful will spread their prayer mats for the mid-day services. The oldest of these mosques on the Niger River date to the fifteenth century.



A lauh or study board is used by Muslim students for the study and memorization of texts. The verses will be inscribed in ink by a teacher and, once memorized the texts are wiped clean for a new assignment. This lauh came from southern Mauritania and measures only eight inches in length; more typical in the Sudanic belt are boards up to two feet in length.

The "Friday" mosque of Zanzibar, Tanzania is typical of a style associated with North Africa and the Middle East where Ottoman influence was strong. Soaring minarets (where the official stands to call the faithful to prayer) and cupolas distinguish this type of mosque from the Sudanese style.

Mosques and elaborate calligraphic designs along with intricate geometric adornment are among the main artistic forms in orthodox Islam where prohibitions against anthropomorphism have had the effect of discouraging other visual and plastic arts.

African Religious Influences in the Black Diaspora

That Africans and African religions have influenced others throughout the world can be seen by the following:

Ethiopianism

During the nineteenth century, a movement known as "Ethiopianism" arose in the English-speaking black world. It was inspired by the King James Bible which uses the word "Ethiopia" frequently, especially in the Old Testament, to translate the Hebrew word, "Kush." The favorite passage of the Ethiopianists was Psalm 68, verse 31, which reads "Ethiopia shall lift up her hands to God." Ethiopianists combined this passage with their knowledge of the existence of a historic Black church in Ethiopia. They believed that Blacks had a special role in the development of Christianity, and they set about organizing their own churches, which would provide an atmosphere and a structure within which Black Christianity could thrive. Such churches appeared in the United States, in the West Indies, in West Africa, and in South Africa. One example of such a church is the Abyssinian Baptist Church, but there were, and still are, hundreds of others.

One very distinctive kind of Ethiopianism is Rastafarianism. Rastafarianism is a religion originating among Jamaican blacks in the late 1920s. Rastafarianism has many of its roots in historic Christianity, but it also reflects other cultural beliefs and values held by the oppressed poor of that West Indian island. They worshipped the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Sellassie, who ruled his country from 1930 to 1974. The religion took its name from the name Tafari, which was Haile Sellassie's name before he was crowned. "Ras" was his title at that time, so the religion was named after Ras Tafari. Rastafarianism has flourished over the past fifty years, and its followers have migrated to many countries. Their music has followed them, and in the 1980s reggae became an extremely popular and influential style of music. Many of the references in reggae music which outsiders find difficult to understand are references to Rasta religious beliefs.

Voodoo

When the subject of African religions come up, a question about Voodoo is often not far behind, for there is a certain logic in associating spirit possession in some African religions with Haitian Voodoo. Its origins, indeed, are from African religions, in particular those of people in West Africa such as the Yoruba, Fon, and Ewe. Spelled in different ways--Vaudou, Vodoo, Voodoo--the name is said to come from a word meaning "genius, protecting spirit"; in the Fon language it is called "Voduh" and in Ewe it is "Vudu." The actual form of Voodoo is purely the result of over four hundred years' development among Haiti's black people. Although forms of Voodoo are practiced elsewhere in the Caribbean, in Brazil, and in parts of the United States, it is Haiti that must be regarded as the center which accounts for the most highly developed practice of Voodoo. Despite efforts by sucessive administrations on the island to abolish the practice, Voodoo has survived and forms a vibrant complement to Roman Catholic practice in

Haiti. Indeed, Voodoo ritual has incorporated elements of Catholic practices, such as candles and crucifix on the altar and prayers to Christian saints.

Voodoo provides a system of belief especially focused on death and dying and an intimacy of relationship with gods for followers who may otherwise find the Catholic hierarchy of deity and saints too impersonal. In Voodoo there are intercessors between God and the individual in the form of loa, or lesser gods, of which there are hundreds. The loa, perhaps in the form of a sacred snake, enters and acts through the body of a person in trance or possessed during religious ceremonies presided over by mambos (priestesses) or hungans (priests). Drum beating, dancing, use of sacrificial animals like pigs or roosters, special clothes, and ritual objects are common elements of Voodoo ceremonies. The ceremonies are not unlike those of some West African spirit possession cults, although they reflect values and religious ideas that are purely Haitian. Other aspects of Haitian Voodoo borrow from the secret societies common in many West African communities; the preoccupation of Voodoo with death and pleasing the dead is a direct ramification of some forms of ancestor worship in Africa. Fear of the influence of dead persons who have not been properly cared for is also reflected in Voodoo concern with zombies, the living dead who have been revived after death to do the will of others (usually due to their families' not taking precautions).

Black Muslims (The Nation of Islam)

The 1960s slogan "Black is Beautiful" is by no means a new way for America's Black community to assert the dignity of its people. During the second decade of the century, Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey was a leading advocate of Black pride, establishing the Universal Negro Improvement Association which taught self-reliance and advocated emigration back to Africa. This sentiment linking Black Americans with their African roots not simply accounts for the popularity of Garvey's pan-African ideas but also explains the origin of the Nation of Islam or "Black Muslims" in the 1930s.

The movement's founder, a Detroit man known as Wallace Fard (and also F. Muhammud Ali), believed that of the two halves of humanity, the weak and evil side or whites were given 6000 years (until 1984) to rule, thereafter Blacks would take over. Elijah Muhammud (d.1975) succeeded to leadership in the Nation of Islam during the 1930s, claiming to be Allah's messenger and advocating a puritanism that had some foundation in the Islam we know in Africa and the Middle East. His preaching included abstinence, discipline, and self-sufficiency.

This last idea was put into practice through the establishment of a wide range of entrepreneurial activities--from food processing to retailing and property speculation--which has made the Nation of Islam a wealthy organization. A newspaper, The Muslim News, and a number of schools and a university are also run by the group. Although Chicago was the base for Elijah Muhammud's activities, the largest concentration of Black Muslims is in the Washington, D.C. area, and some of their major economic ventures have been in the U.S. South.

During the 1970s, the Nation of Islam expanded its appeal from traditional strengths among the poorest of the Black community and prison populations, to the Black middle class. Although critics have alleged this marks a major shift in the focus of the movement, such important prohibitions as refusing U.S. government assistance in any form have remained central to administrative practice in the Nation.

The Nation of Islam has been challenged from within and outside during the past two decades, and it has produced a number of splinter groups. One of the more celebrated splinter groups came with the defection of Malcom X from the movement in 1964. Another recent change has been the employment of Middle Eastern Muslims to, in effect, "islamicize" the movement. The Nation of Islam, originally drawing on little knowledge of Muslim Africa, is fast becoming a well-informed Muslim movement, drawing on its African roots for inspiration.

Kwanza: An African-American Celebration

Kwanza, a seven-day (December 26-January 1) celebration, was created in 1966 by Maulana Ron Karenga to bring together Americans of African descent in an observance of some of the traditions and values of their heritage. "Kwanza," a Swahili word for "first" refers to "first fruits," in line with the harvest theme that dominates the celebration. The very detailed outline of activities for Kwanza, observed each year by more and more black Americans, is not drawn from any particular ethnic group or country in Africa but uses symbols and principles believed to be generally important in traditional African life. The celebration, using Swahili words, emphasizes reflection on the "seven basic principles" called "Nguzo Saba," enjoyment of the fruits of labor, and a recommitment to working cooperatively for the betterment of family, community, and African people.

The symbols of Kwanza are a straw mat (mkeka), on which offerings are placed; a seven-hole candleholder (kinara), representing the stalk from which African people originated; seven candles (mishumaa), representing the seven basic principles; and ears of corn (mahindi), representing the children of the stalk.

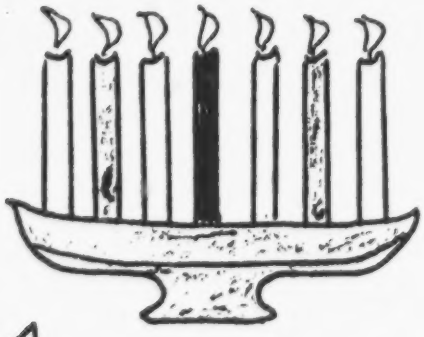
On each day of Kwanza, one of the seven principles is emphasized in greetings, the lighting of a candle, and general discussion of its meaning. The principles, in order of their introduction, are:

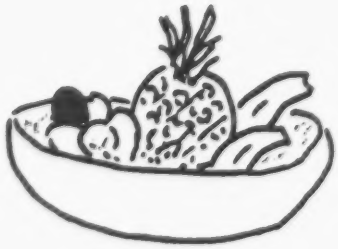
1. Umoja (oo-moh-jah): unity
2. Kujichagulia (koo-jee-chah-goo-lee-ah): self-determination
3. Ujima (oo-jee-mah): collective work and responsibilities
4. Ujamaa (oo-jah-mah): cooperative economics
5. Nia (nee-ah): purpose
6. Kuumba (koo-oom-bah): creativity
7. Imani (ee-mah-nee): faith

Decorations for Kwanza feature red, black, and green in the general color scheme. The candles (mishuma) used in the candlelighting ceremony--which takes place when the collective family is gathered together--are placed in the candle stick (kinara) as follows: a black candle,

representing African people everywhere, in the center; three red candles, for the blood of the ancestors, on the left side; and three green candles, for the earth, youth and new ideas, on the right. Beginning on December 26 with the black candle, a candle is lit each day, alternating from left to right.

While fasting is recommended as a means of preparing body and mind for the celebration, there is also sharing of food, such as a large collection of African fruits and vegetables. On the evening of December 31 there is a big celebration with food, dancing, and music in which the collective family joins. Handmade gifts, "zawadi," are opened on the final day of Kwanza, January 1, called "Karamu."





Biographical Sketches of Religious Leaders

BAMBA, AHMAD (1850-1927). He was founder of the Mouridiyya brotherhood in Senegal which is now the sufi tariqa for about 20% of the population in that country. By all accounts he was not especially distinguished for his learning, but he came from a scholarly lineage and his religious tracts and preaching attracted adherents who eventually founded their own villages. At the time the French were extending their administration over the Senegalese hinterland, Ahmad Bamba came under suspicion as a potential opponent, was arrested in 1895, and sent into exile in Gabon until 1902. His following, however, continued to increase and soon after his return to Senegal he was again sent away by the French, this time for five years in Mauritania. There, he began preaching a new litany (he had been a member of the Qadiriyya brotherhood) which was taken up by his followers. Murid in Arabic means disciple, and his followers were known as Murids (Mourides in French), or members of the Muridiyya (Mouridiyya in French) brotherhood. After his second return to Senegal, he seems to have taken pains to avoid confrontation with the French administration. In 1910, he sent a letter to his followers urging them to obey the colonial government; he received a decoration from the administration in 1918 for his help in troop recruitment during the war. His last years were spent in study and meditation. When he died in 1927 the Mouridiyya numbered over 100,000 members. Ahmad Bamba's Mouridiyya is perhaps most famous for the founder's work ethic, "Go and Work," which led them to colonize the Senegalese hinterland. In recent times, the Mouridiyya have produced about one-quarter of Senegal's main cash crop, peanuts. This has given considerable political clout to the over one-half million Mourides in Senegal today and to their leaders, who since the shaikh's death have presided over the establishment of one of Africa's most highly disciplined and centralized sufi brotherhoods.

BASELYOS, ABUNA (1891-1970). The first Ethiopian patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, he broke a line of Egyptian bishops which stretched back to the fourth century. He studied at the famous monastery of Dabra Libanos, where he became a monk at the age of twenty-one. In 1933 he went to Jerusalem to take charge of the Ethiopian monastery and religious community there. He returned to Ethiopia in 1935 and was appointed echage, a monastic leader and the highest church office to which Ethiopians could then aspire. In the same year, he accompanied Emperor Haile Sellassie to the Battle of Maichew in which the invading Italians broke the imperial army. He also accompanied the emperor into exile, settling in Jerusalem where he provided spiritual leadership for the entire exiled Ethiopian community. He returned to Ethiopia with the emperor in 1941. In 1948 he was consecrated bishop in Cairo, and in 1951 he became archbishop and metropolitan, the first Ethiopian to be head of the church. He was raised to the rank of patriarch in 1959. Closely associated with Haile Sellassie throughout his career, Baselyos helped put down an attempted coup in 1960 by anathematizing its participants. He died in 1970 and was buried at Dabra Libanos.

BEATRIZ, DONA (? - 1706). In 1704, during the waning days of the Kingdom of Kongo (in present day Zaire), at a time when Africans were greatly

disillusioned with the slave activities of Portuguese bishops and priests, a 22-year old Mukongo woman named Kimpa Vita, later known as Dona Beatriz, came forward to lead both a political revival of the Bakongo and the establishment of a new church, the "Antonian" sect. Her rapid, though short, rise to power could be at least partially attributed to her knowledge and skillful use of Christian ideas as well as African religious traditions. Dona Beatriz claimed she had actually died but at the same time St. Anthony, a Christian saint greatly revered by the Portuguese, had entered her head in place of her soul and thereafter acted through her body. The "saint" set about rallying the Bakongo to rebuild the earthly kingdom, predicting that Judgment was near. Nobles venerated her and legends spread about her power over nature: twisted, fallen trees straightened as she passed, they said. She reenacted many of the parts of the Christian story, "dying" every Friday, being "born again" each Saturday, going up to heaven to plead the cause of the blacks against the whites. When she, though unmarried, gave birth to a son, she proclaimed that it came from God. However, this story and others led to her exposure as a deceiver of the people. Dona Beatriz, with her child in her arms, was burned at the stake in 1706. Her followers, Antonians or "little Anthonys," continued the movement for several years, proclaiming Kongo as the true Holy Land.

BLYDEN, EDWARD WILMOT (1832-1912). He was not so much a religious leader as one of Africa's foremost religious philosophers. Born in the Virgin Islands, he emigrated to Liberia at age eighteen and was associated with that country for the remainder of his career as a teacher, journalist, diplomat, and politician. He was, above all, a pan-Africanist in a time well before that phrase came into use. His extensive studies and travels led him to question much of what was fundamental to his religious training in the Presbyterian Church. In 1887 he published his magnum opus: Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, which roundly criticized the practice of Protestant Christian missionaries and their irrelevance to the African scene and pointed to the accomplishments and civilizing mission of Islam in his adopted homeland. The book stirred immediate controversy among British mission societies, received praise in the press of Damascus and Beirut, and remains today one of the most valuable documents of its period on the confrontation of Islam and Christianity in West Africa.

HAMALLAH, SHAIKH (1883-1943). He was a practitioner of the Tijaniyya brotherhood whose home was in Nioro near the frontier between southeastern Mauritania and Mali. His preaching, which began to attract attention about 1910, called for certain reforms in the Tijaniyya and brought down the wrath of Tijani leaders in Senegal, who by this time were working in cooperation with the French administration. The size of Hamallah's following, French officials' concern about subversives, and violence between some of the shaikh's adherents and others, led to the holy man's arrest in 1924 and his exile to western Mauritania. By the time he was allowed to return home ten years later, the Hamalliyya had become identified in the popular mind as an anti-French movement. The shaikh was again exiled first to Algeria in 1940, then to France where he died. That the

shaikh preached against the Muslim collaborators with the French seems clear. He may also have incited anti-French sentiments, but throughout his career no clear evidence of this was uncovered by French authorities. By the late 1940s, Hamallists were found throughout French West Africa and were associated in parts with radical political movements--possibly due more to French action against them than as a result of the shaikh's own preaching. Today, his tomb in a cemetery in Montluçon, France is a site of regular pilgrimage by West African Muslims in Europe.

HARRIS, WILLIAM WADE (1864-1929). Also known as the Prophet Harris he was a political rebel and Episcopal catechist and teacher. He received a command from God to serve as his prophet in 1912 while imprisoned for his political activism, and by the end of his career his church had attracted a wide following in the Ivory Coast and even Ghana. By preaching a message that did not deny to his followers their social roots, he attracted many Christian converts who had felt alienated from their societies by following the strictures of the missionaries. But, he also brought to his church many people in the Ivory Coast who had no knowledge of the missionaries. His successes attracted the suspicion of colonial authorities in the French and British territories and led to his expulsion from the Ivory Coast and a campaign in 1915 to destroy churches built by his followers. In some areas the religion became a rallying cry for anti-French sentiments. One of the main leaders of Prophet Harris in Ghana was the Prophetess Madam Harris Grace Thannie, who became widely known for her healing and exorcism. Many other movements during the colonial period were inspired by Harris, despite his own advice that converts seek out membership in either Roman Catholic or Methodist churches.

KAGGWA, SIR APOLO (? - 1927). Kaggwa served as prime minister of Buganda from 1889 to 1926. Converted to Christianity by CMS missionaries in the early 1880s, he became prominent during the religious and dynastic wars which wracked Buganda from 1887 to 1889. These wars pitted Catholics, Muslims, and Protestants against each other. It was as the leader of the Protestant faction, backed by the British, that Kaggwa rose to power. A man of great energy he was the first modern Ugandan historian to record the traditions and customs of his people in four books written between 1900 and 1912. Kaggwa also directed much energy to the accumulation of land and was knighted by the British. He died within a year of his removal from office.

KIMBANGU, SIMON (1889-1950). Born in Nkamba at the extreme western part of Zaire near the mouth of the Zaire river, he was educated by Baptist missionaries and worked as a catechist. During a flu epidemic in 1918 and on a number of occasions thereafter, Kimbangu believed he had a direct visit from God who told him to go out and preach and heal. He hesitated at first but on April 6, 1921 (the date marked as the founding of the Kimbanguist church) he effected the first of many miraculous cures. He began to preach and teach from the Bible, attacking sorcery and urging his listeners to destroy their fetishes. Although he attributed the healings to God's power working through him and made no claims for himself, Kimbangu drew large crowds of followers--including a group of twelve special disciples--and the

village of Nkamba became a place of pilgrimage, the New Jerusalem. So fervent were his followers and so rapidly did their numbers grow that it threatened Belgian rule. The Belgian authorities arrested Kimbangu after only six months of preaching and without a trial exiled him to the distant province of Shaba. He died there in 1950, but his church survived him, at first developing underground and then openly. Today, headed by Kimbangu's youngest son, Joseph Diangenda, the Kimbanguist Church numbers over four million members, has spread to other African countries, and is a member of The World Council of Churches.

LENSHINA, ALICE (circa 1920-1978). She founded the Lumpa Church amongst the Bemba of Zambia. Following an experience of death and resurrection, she entered the Church of Scotland through baptism in 1953. By 1954, she was preaching fervently against witchcraft, advocating moral purity, and baptizing her own followers. Mild and gentle in manner, she continued to receive visions, which she passed on through hymns that drew on Bemba music. Her church spread to the main towns of Zambia, and by 1959 its membership peaked between 50,000 and 100,000. Lenshina's social message led her followers to form independent villages and to keep their children out of school. Conflict with secular authority climaxed in August 1964 on the eve of independence when Zambian officials detained Lenshina and broke up the villages. Lenshina died in detention in 1978.

MUHAMMAD 'ABDILLE HASSAN (1864-1920). He was a Somali poet, religious leader, and organizer of resistance against colonial rule. He was a brilliant scholar, who traveled widely. In Mecca he joined the Salihiyya order, then returned to Somalia. He was a fervent preacher, advocating puritan practices and strict devotion. He clashed with the established Muslim leaders, followers of the Qadiriyya order. In 1899, he declared a holy war of resistance against the Christian colonizers of the Somali, especially the British and the Ethiopians, and for twenty years he pursued this war using Muslim fervor, his great poetic gifts, and astute diplomacy to keep his enemies at bay. He died of a fever at the end of 1920, and his movement, already in a precarious military situation, collapsed. He has become a great hero of modern Somali independence.

MUHAMMAD AHMAD (1843-1885). The "Sudanese Mahdi," he was a Muslim cleric and member of the Sammaniyya brotherhood who preached against the worldliness of other religious leaders for a ten-year period before he received a revelation informing him that he was the mahdi, the deliverer, sent by God to prepare the world for the end of time. Beginning in 1881, he urged holy war (jihad) against Turkish, then British adminstration of the Sudan and his forces defeated two British expeditions. The mahdi, Muhammad Ahmad, died in 1885 but his appointed successor (Khalifa), Abd Allah, pursued his master's religious and political program. British forces remounted their attack the following decade and, in 1898, killed the Khalifa and thousands of his followers in a particularly ferocious battle at Omdurman. During the course of the twentieth century, the mahdi has taken on particular political importance in the Sudan as a symbol of Sudanese resistance to foreign intrusions, politically and culturally, and few political groups or, since

independence, political parties and coalition governments have survived any length of time without paying at least lip service to mahdist causes.

NAYAS, AL-HAJJ IBRAHIM (1902-1974). He was a Senegalese cleric and leader of one of the two branches of the Tijaniyya brotherhood in that country. He came from a family of Islamic teachers in Kaolack, Senegal, the area from which his main body of followers came. He traveled widely after his first pilgrimage in the early 1930s to the tomb of the brotherhood's founder, Ahmad al-Tijani, in North Africa and then to Mecca. It was there that he met the amir ("commander") of Kano, Nigeria (a title the British kept in their administration of the Islamic lands of northern Nigeria) who invited him to pass through Nigeria on his return. From that visit onwards a growing number of Tijanis in northern Nigeria transferred their allegiance to the Kaolack shaikh with whom adherents associated a more progressive and modern form of Islam. Indeed, by the time of al-Hajj Ibrahim's death, his following outside of Senegal--in Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Mali--was of greater importance than his Senegalese flock; it certainly played an important role in the politics of many Muslim communities, not the least of which was Kano. During the 1960s, it was rumored in Ghana that President Nkrumah had consulted with the shaikh on religious matters. The al-Hajj's career well illustrates pan-Islamic and international links which Islam fostered.

NEHANDA MEDIUM (? - 1898). This medium was a woman whom the great Nehanda spirit would visit. She was one of a long line of such mediums amongst the Shona people of Zimbabwe. She lived in Mazoe district, near modern Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe. Following their subjugation by the British South African Company, in 1896 the Shona followed the lead of the Nehanda and other spirit mediums in rebelling against British rule. The Nehanda medium preached that the rebels should touch nothing belonging to the whites, nor should they use European weapons. Her followers believed she could turn bullets to water. Her subordinate mediums formed an intelligence network which provided information to the rebels, while she herself offered medicine and prayers to strengthen their morale. She was captured by the British in 1897 and in March 1898 was executed for her role in the death of a British commissioner.

al-SANUSI, SAYYID MUHAMMAD bin 'ALI (1787-1859). Founder of the Sanusiyya brotherhood, he was born into a learned family in Cyrenaica (western Libya), studied in Fez, and early in his career performed the pilgrimage to Mecca where he also took up studies. His preaching of Islamic reform made rapid conversions and led to opposition from Turkish authorities in Mecca; he returned to his homeland in 1843. Although most of his adult career was spent in Arabia, the headquarters for the brotherhood was at Jaghubub in Cyrenaica, and it was there an imposing university was founded and the Sayyid retired to write and meditate. From this center arose an extremely well organized brotherhood, active in proselytization that attracted adherents from Arabia to Morocco and the Libyan coast to northern Nigeria, especially under al-Sanusi's successors. When the French, and later the Italians made claims on Cyrenaica, their chief opposition was the Sanusiyya

brotherhood whose leaders organized military resistance against the infidels into the second decade of the twentieth century. Although the Sanusiyya was crushed, the religious movement-turned nationalist struggle left a deep impression on Libyan society. Among other things, it left a political culture firmly rooted in notions of puritanical Islam which has been manipulated with skill by Colonel Qaddafi, the current ruler of Libya.

SHEMBE, ISAIAH (1870-1935). A Zulu prophet and founder of the Nazarite Church, Shembe was born in Natal in South Africa. As a boy he suffered intense moral conflicts and as he grew up he experienced four great visions. These led him to cut his ties to his four wives and his mother, and to travel as a preacher in Natal, healing and calling for purity. He was not baptized until 1906. He founded his Nazarite Church in 1911. In 1916, he settled in the village of Ekuphakameni and made a pilgrimage to Mount Nhlangakazi. Both became holy places to which his followers still make their annual pilgrimages. A man with a magnetic personality, he was one of the most influential Zulus of modern times.

UTHMAN IBN FUTI, SHAIKH (1754-1817). More commonly known by the Hausa version of his name, Shehu Uthman dan Fodio, he was the reformer in northern Nigeria who set in motion an Islamic state that has influenced religious and political life in that region for the past century and three-quarters. He was a Fulani scholar whose message of reform led his followers to a military confrontation with the established Hausa regimes. A number of amirates or principalities were eventually created which were all linked to the spiritual influence of dan Fodio's descendents. When the British conquered Nigeria at the beginning of the twentieth century, they administered the north through the amirates. In effect, the British administration greatly strengthened the amirs and aided the expansion of Islam in northern Nigeria. At the time of independence, Islamic authorities and government in northern Nigeria were so closely interlinked that the region was able to enter the era of party politics in Nigeria under, essentially, the same ruling structures that had been in place for the past 150 years. Uthman dan Fodio was the author of numerous religious and political tracts which are still being reprinted in Nigeria and Cairo and to which the contemporary leaders of the northern states of Nigeria refer for guidance and legitimation.

YOHANNES IV (? - 1889). He ruled Ethiopia from 1871 to 1889. He was a devout Christian who tried to unify and reform his people through religion. Although an active warrior, he relied on the advice of priests and monks, and lived austerely. After the death of his wife, he became celibate and had his food prepared by a monk. He tried to eliminate factionalism within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, holding a great council at Boru Meda in 1878. He wanted to convert his Muslim subjects to Christianity, and tried to use force to this end, with only partial success. He also tried to eliminate the smoking of tobacco and such popular forms of religion as possession cults. He died in battle at Matamma fighting against the Ansar forces who followed the message of Muhammad Ahmad, the Sudanese Mahdi.

Glossary

AFRIKAANER/AFRIKAANS. Residents in South Africa of Dutch descent and their language; the Afrikaans language is also spoken by persons of mixed race in that country, known under the apartheid system as "Coloureds."

AGE SET. A group of people initiated together in a religious ceremony who retain a corporate identity throughout their lives.

AKUABA. A fertility doll carried by a woman in Asante society to ensure the birth of a child.

ALADURA. Independent church movement in Nigeria.

ALLAH. Arabic for "God."

AMULET. A small, leather-encased religious memento, sometimes used to ward off bad happenings and frequently worn on the body.

ANCESTOR CULT. Religious practice with the object of venerating deceased ancestors.

APARTHEID. Afrikaans word for "apartness." South African government policy that prohibits the intermingling of races and assures the dominance of the minority white population.

ARIAN. A group in early Christianity who claimed Jesus was not fully divine.

ASANTE. Empire and people in the south-central region of modern-day Ghana which flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

BAMBARA. Ethnic group found in the Senegal River Basin stretching east to Mali.

CALIPH/CALIPHATE. Arabic for "successor," referring to the first successor to the Prophet Muhammad, then the temporal rulers of the Abbasid period of caliphal rule or Abbasid caliphate during the tenth century A.D.

CHEIKH. Arabic; see SHAIKH.

COPTIC CHURCH. Egyptian Christian church which dates from the very early days of Christendom and to which 5-10% of the Egyptian population adheres.

DEBTERAH. Musician or scribe in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

DIASPORA, AFRICAN. The dispersal of Black Africans in the New World, North Africa, and Asia largely as a result of the slave trade.

DIVINER, DIVINATION. Religious counselor believed to have special powers to predict events and to identify human and spiritual causes of misfortune. Divination practice may involve symbolic objects,

diagnostic questioning, mathematical formulae, and/or spirit possession.

ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH. One of the oldest Christian churches in Africa. Once linked administratively to the Egyptian (Coptic) Church, it is now completely independent.

FETISH PRIEST. A religious specialist associated with a holy place or shrine.

al-FITR. Arabic; see ID AL-SAGHIR.

FULFULDE. Ethnic group dispersed throughout West Africa; generally associated with pastoral economies; and influential because it has many Muslim clerics; also known as "Fulani."

GREGORIAN CALENDAR. Calendar instituted by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 which established the current Christian system of dating.

HADITH. Arabic for a "Tradition"; practice of the Prophet and his community that was written down and served to guide subsequent generations.

HAJJ. Arabic for "pilgrimage," usually with reference to Mecca; one who has performed the pilgrimage is in some parts of Africa given the title al-Hajji (male) or al-Hajjia (female).

HASSANIYYA. A dialect of Arabic spoken in Mauritania.

HAUSA. Language spoken and, by implication, an ethnic group in Northern Nigeria (where Islam predominates) which has become something of a commercial lingua franca in much of West Central Africa.

HIJRA. Arabic for "migration" or flight from danger; associated with the Prophet Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina in 622 A.D. which marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

ID AL-KABIR. Muslim festival at the year's end involving ritual sheep slaughter; also known as al-fitr.

ID AL-SAGHIR. Muslim festival marking the end of the month of fasting, Ramadan.

ISLAM. Arabic for "submission"; from the verb salama, "to submit" and origin of Muslim, "one who submits" to the will of Allah.

JALABIYYA. Arabic for long flowing shift worn by men in many Muslim societies, sometimes identified with "Muslim dress."

KABAKA. Traditional ruler of the Baganda in the modern-day state of Uganda.

KHALIFA. Arabic; see CALIPH.

KIMBANGUIST CHURCH. Independent church founded by Simon Kimbangu in the west coastal region of Zaire.

KOLA NUT. Chestnut-sized red or white nut with interlocking bifurcated lobes grown in the forest zone of West Africa; used in a number of religious ceremonies and a symbol of a relationship.

KORAN. Arabic; see QUP'AN.

KWANZA. Swahili for "first"; African-American celebration, December 26-January 1, incorporating elements of African festival traditions.

MAHDI. Arabic for "chosen one," "deliver"; believed by Muslims to be sent by God to prepare the world for the end of time.

MALAM. Hausa for "holy man"; Islamic cleric.

MAU MAU. A nationalist movement so named by the British in Kenya in the early 1950s, misunderstood by the colonial authorities as a fanatical religous cult focused upon an inviolate oath or pledge of loyalty.

MENDE. Ethnic group found in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia.

MONOGAMY. The practice of one man and one woman being united in marriage.

MONOPHYSITISM. Belief in one nature of Christ (divine/human in one) confessed by the Egyptian, Ethiopian, and Syrian churches; condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D.

MONOTHEISM. Religious practice based on the belief in a single God.

MOSQUE. Religious edifice in Islam for group prayer.

MOURIDIYYA. A mystic brotherhood or order in Islam practiced in Senegal; founded on the practice of Ahmadu Bamba (d.1926).

MUHARRAM. The first month of the Muslim year, on the tenth day of which the Muslim New Year is celebrated.

MULUD. Muslim festival celebrating the prophet Muhammad's birthday; twelfth of Rabia I (the third month of the Muslim year).

MUSLIM (also Moslem). See ISLAM.

NAZARITES. Independent church in South Africa founded by Isaiah Shembe.

OGUN. Supreme deity in Yoruba cosmology.

OTTOMAN. Regime that governed Turkey from the sixteenth century until World War I, viewed during that time as a center of the Islamic world by parts of Africa.

PAN-ISLAMIC. One of the pan-movements that became popularized in the

early twentieth century that sought to unite disparate peoples sharing a common cultural or lingustic heritage; like pan-Africanism and pan-Americanism, pan-Islamic ideas sought a unity through Islam of people from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean.

POLYGYNY. The practice of a man's having multiple wives.

PURDAH. Arabic for the seclusion of women in Islamic lands; not actually an Islamic custom, but by inference it has become so through its practice in the Arab world.

QADIRIYYA. A mystic brotherhood or order, one of the oldest in the Islamic world, found throughout Islamic Africa.

QUR'AN. Also KORAN; the holy book of Islam consisting of revelations to the Prophet Muhammad.

RAMADAN. The ninth month of the Muslim calendar designated as a month of obligatory fasting from sunup to sundown for all good Muslims.

SALAT. Arabic for "prayer"; one of the "pillars of the faith."

SALLA. Hausa; Muslim festival at the end of the month of fasting, Ramadan.

SERAPHIM and CHERUBIM CHURCH. Independent church in southwestern Nigeria.

SHAHADA. Arabic for profession of faith in Islam; declaration that there is only one God and Muhammad is his messenger.

SHAIKH. Arabic for "holy man" in Islamic lands, usually associated with leadership in the sufi brotherhoods.

SHARI'A. Arabic for Islamic law.

SHEHU. Hausa meaning "shaikh."

SHI'ITE SECT. An Islamic sect that dates from the seventh century not widely found in Africa; generally contrasted with "orthodox" or sunni Islam.

SUDANIC AFRICA. The belt of sub-Saharan Africa lying north of the forest zone, stretching from the Atlantic to the Red Sea.

SUFI. Arabic for "mystic."

SUNNI. "Orthodox" Islam; the vast majority of Muslims in Africa consider themselves sunni.

TABASKI. Wolof; Muslim festival on the twelfth day of the last month of the year; also known in Arabic as al-id al-kabir.

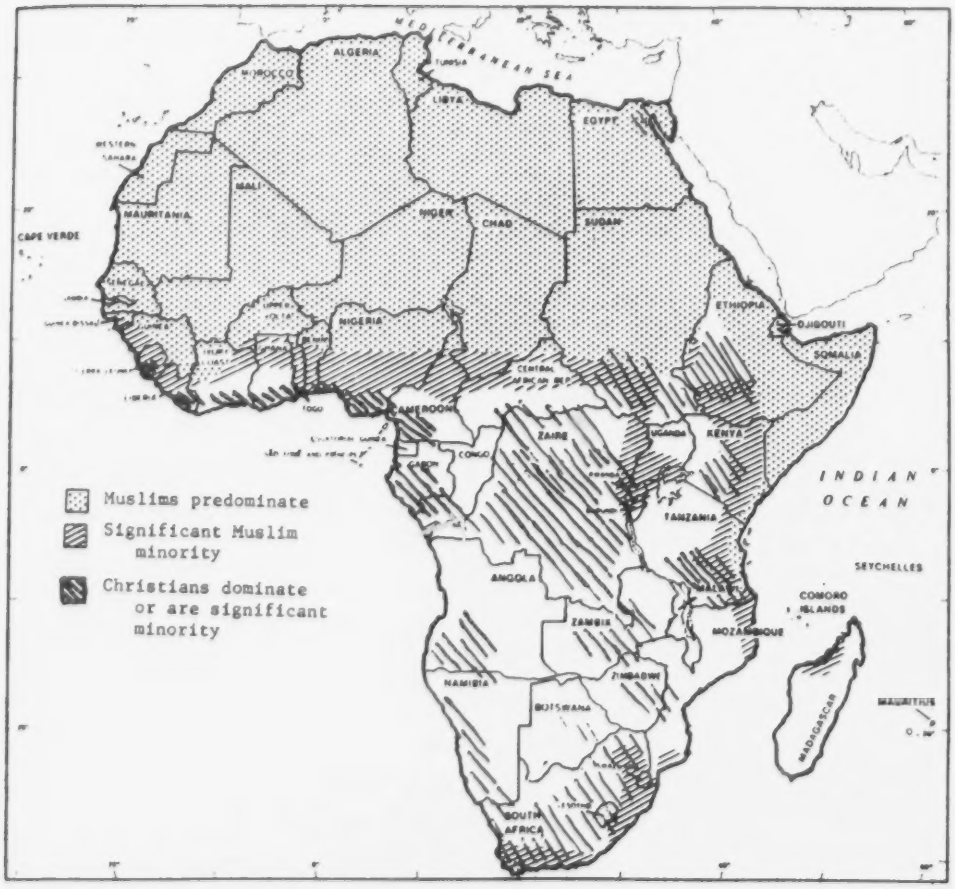
TIJANIYYA. A mystic brotherhood or order in Islam founded in the eighteenth century and popularized throughout West Africa during the nineteenth

and twentieth centuries.

VOODOO. Religious practice associated with Haiti but also found in other Caribbean settings; originated from practices from Dahomey (Benin).

YORUBA. Ethnic group found in modern Western Nigeria and Benin, famous for its complex pantheon of gods and its early welcome of Christian missionaries.

ZAKAT. One of the pillars of the faith in Islam; the giving of alms to the poor, widows, and children.



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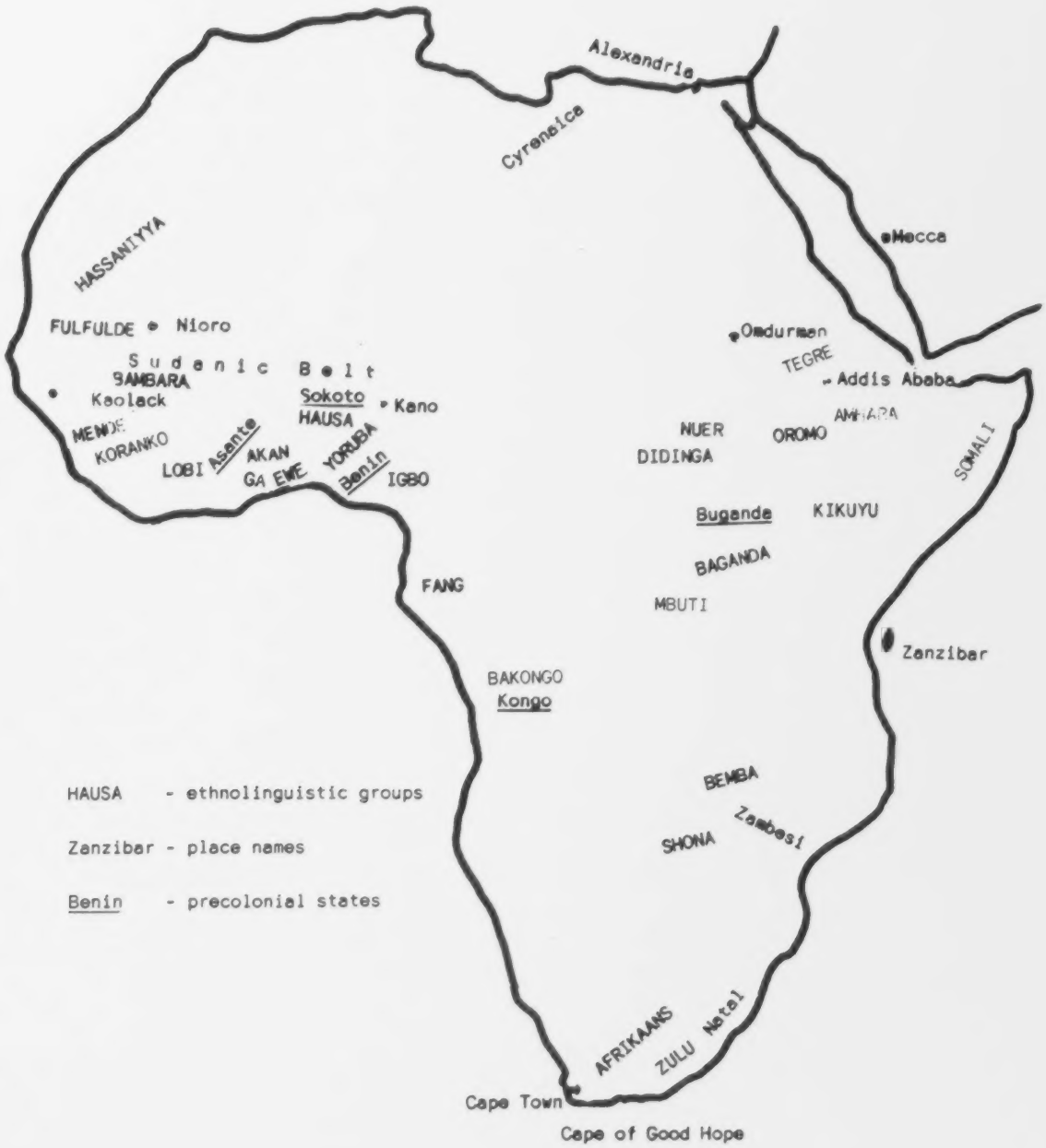
Principal Ethnic and Linguistic Groups and Place Names Mentioned



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The Christians, 11: Missions Abroad. 40 min. color, 1976. Study of the missionary movement, focusing on British activities in Tanzania and missionary attempts to adapt to traditional African cultures and beliefs and to establish a dialogue with Muslims.

A Great Tree Has Fallen. 22 min. color. Sequence of ceremonies connected with the funeral of a King of Asante (Ghana) and the enthronement of his successor.

Islam and Africa. 39 slides with notes available from the African Studies Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Rise Up and Walk. 28 min. color, 1982. Film and discussion guide on independent African churches in Kenya, Ivory Coast, Swaziland, Zaire, Liberia, and Egypt.

For rental information on these and other films, contact University of Illinois Film Center, 1325 South Oak Street, Champaign, IL 61820. (217) 333-1360. Toll free numbers: in Illinois, 1-800-252-1357; U.S.A., 1-800-367-3456.

Records, Music Resources

"Listening to African Music: Some Resources." An annotated list of records, which includes traditional religious music, African masses, children's music, and other resources available for listening and/or performing. Available from the African Studies Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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